Literary techniques and communicative aims in a selection of martyr narratives from the first three centuries C.E.

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

Studies dealing with martyr literature have seen scholarship explore the subject from a strictly historical perspective. However, this study moves away from a historical approach and looks at analyzing martyr literature and in particular, a selection of martyr stories from the first three centuries of Christianity, within the frameworks of New Historicism and Narratology.

This thesis is made up of three chapters which interlink and provide the reader with a wider picture on early Christian literature, and in particular, martyr stories. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study and looks at the methodology, theoretical points of departure, research question, hypothesis, trends in scholarship and key terms. This content forms the basis for the presentation of the material in the rest of the thesis. Chapter two consists of a thorough literary analysis of a selection of passion narratives. This selection includes: the passion narratives of Jesus from the canonical gospels, the story of Stephen from The Acts of the Apostles, the narrative about Polycarp of Smyrna from *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and the narrative about Vibia Perpetua from *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*. This chapter argues that the gospel narratives were used as a "proto-narrative" by authors of later martyr stories when they created their own narratives. This argument is based on an assessment of the role of *imitatio Christi* and narrative mirroring in the various stories. Additionally, the three later martyr *passiones* (those of Stephen, Polycarp and Perpetua) which have been selected for analysis in chapter two are further examined in chapter three in order to assess whether these narratives were written with protreptic and / or paraenetic purposes in mind. In a close reading of these narratives, the study has found that the selected martyr stories aimed to fulfill both protreptic and paraenetic functions and played a strategic role in the growth and spread of the early Christian church.

Opsomming

Vorige studies wat marelaarsliteratuur ondersoek vertoon die tendens om die onderwerp vanuit `n streng historiese oogpunt te benader. Hierdie studie beweeg egter weg van `n historiese benadering and poog om martelaarsliteratuur, en spesifiek `n seleksie van materlaarsverhale uit die eerste drie eeue van Christendom, te analiseer binne die raamwerke van die Nuwe Historiese Benadering (New Historicism) en die Narratologie. Die tesis bestaan uit drie afdelings wat nou met mekaar verband hou en aan die leser `n breë perspektief bied op vroeë Christelike letterkunde, en meer spesifiek martelaarsverhale. Hoofstuk een verskaf `n inleiding tot die studie en neem die metodologie, teoretiese vertrekpunte, navorsingsvraag, hipotese en rigtings in die navorsing in oënskou. Die inhoud van hierdie gedeelte vorm die basis vir die aanbieding van die materiaal in die res van die tesis. Hoofstuk twee bestaan uit `n deeglike literêre analise van `n seleksie van lydingsverhale. Hierdie seleksie sluit die die volgende werke in: die lydensverhale van Jesus in die kononieke evangelies, die verhaal van Stefanus in die Handelinge van die Apostels, Polycarpus van Smyrna se verhaal, *Die Martelaarskap van Polycarpus (The Martyrdom of Polycarp)* en die storie van Vibia Perpetua uit die *Lydensverhaal van Perpetua en Felicitas (The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity)*. Hierdie hoofstuk betoog dat die verhale uit die evangelies deur die outeurs van latere martelaarsverhale gebruik is as `n proto-narratief in die komposisie van hulle eie martelaarsverhale. Dit word gedoen deur `n ondersoek na die rol van *imitatio Christi* en die tegniek narratiewe spieëlbeelding (narrative mirroring) in die onderskeie verhale. Verder word die drie latere martelaarsverhale wat geselekteer is vir ondersoek in hoofstuk twee in hoofstuk drie verder bestudeer om vas te stel of hierdie verhale geskryf is met protreptiese en / of paraenetiese doelstellings in gedagte. Op grond van `n noukeurige lees van hierdie verhale is daar bevind dat die geselekteerde martelaarsverhale beide protrepticse en paranetiese doelstellings vervul en `n strategiese rol gespeel het in die groei en verspreiding van die vroeë Christelike Kerk.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Reesha and Jyothi, both of whom never fail to be my pillars of strength in this life.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

The age old topic of early Christian persecution has garnered a lot of attention and research not only about the phenomenon in the modern world, but also in the ancient world.[1] The crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ in Judaea marked a turning point within the ancient Greco-Roman world, leading to the exponential growth and spread of Jesus followers.[2] Within this new movement, which came to be known as Christianity, the ancient world witnessed the phenomenon of widespread martyrdom. Moss (2013:4) argues that while martyrdom may be considered a very strange concept from a modern secular perspective, "persecution has been a part of Christianity from the very beginning." However, while there has been much literature in circulation from the ancient and modern world alike, the phenomenon is still baffling to some and the circumstances and consequences resulting from these martyrdoms are still questioned.

When one thinks of early Christian martyrdom, grotesque scenes of unthinkable torture, prolonged death and feelings of immense sadness come to mind.[3] However, to early Christians, affirming their faith in Christ and denying emperor worship meant much more than the hardships they faced at the hands of the local authorities. Dying for Christ was not the end and was a symbol of something much greater. Ton (2010:208) states that it was understood that those Christians who gave themselves up and died as martyrs, would be raised and reign eternally with Jesus Christ. Thus, dying as a martyr, was sought out and desired by all due to the special afterlife reward for those who followed Jesus Christ until death (Ton, 2010:208). On the other hand, and in the words

[1] In an examination of the ancient Greco-Roman world and especially one dealing with religion, it is important to understand the relationship between the citizens and their gods. In the Roman world the state, religion and the worship of gods were intertwined and this formed the basis of Roman life. Additionally, Roman religion was understood as the foundation of the state and as a contributor behind policies. For more on Roman religion and worship in the Empire see Plescia (1971) and Sordi (1983).

[2] Although Judaism was the only foreign religion allowed in the empire and its people exempt from worshipping the state religion, a problem arose with Roman authorities when a small but growing sect of people broke away from Judaism. At the onset of the split the Roman authorities were unable to distinguish between Judaism and the new sect. However, as time went by the new subsect came to be known as Christianity and gained momentum. Consequently, Roman authorities began recognising differences between these two groups and Christianity quickly became understood as being in contravention with Roman law. See Ferguson (1933), Barnes (1984) and Wilken (1984).

[3] See the account by Tacitus on the first state persecution under Emperor Nero in 64 A.D.

of Marcus Aurelius, many pagans and Jews viewed Christianity and the phenomenon of martyrdom as irrational and obstinate.[4]

As a result of this view of early Christianity, on the occasion of a confessed Christian's death, pagans and Jews did not only display their contemptible characteristics as they went into the amphitheater to witness the power of the state crushing their terrorized victims; some went out of pure curiosity which even gave rise to spontaneous conversions. However, for many Christians who went to the amphitheater, their faith was reaffirmed and, in some circumstances, the witnessing of events even sparked cases of voluntary martyrdom.[5] For the pagans and Jews who expected to see the soon to be martyrs quiver with terror and fear at the sight of wild beasts, burning hot flames, various torture devices and gladiators wielding swords, it must have been an utter surprise to see the calm demeanor and willingness of the Christians who masked their emotions at the sight of what awaited them (Mitchell, 2012:36). Cobb (2008:68) argues that this was done because martyrs were not victims, but were active participants in their death, since they chose to die for their belief in Christ. Thus, these martyrdoms were not seen as something bad but rather as great victories in the early Church.

This rise of widespread martyrdom across the empire led to the creation and emergence of martyr literature, and in particular, *passiones*. *Passiones* were documents created and circulated by early Church authorities which recounted the trial, tortures and sometimes miraculous events before a Christian was martyred.[6] Cobb (2008:8) believes that these *passio* accounts allowed their readers to "associate with the feelings, thoughts and circumstances" of the martyred. In addition to this, these *passiones* revealed the courage, strength and steadfastness of the early Christians which played a large role in the creation of their identity in those troubled times (Cobb, 2008:15). Additionally, Cook (1994) argues that early Christians made use of language, including the frequent quotation of scriptural phrases, for multiple purposes, and one of these was to recruit people to their religion. Thus, the creation and spread of *passiones* were instrumental within the early Church, as it served to connect Christians (and would-be Christians) over time and space

[4] *Meditations*, XI.III.
[5] See the account of the *Martyrdom of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonike*, in which Agathonike gave herself up as a voluntary martyr at the execution of the bishop Carpus and his deacon Papylus.
[6] The creation of *passiones* are fully explained in section 1.4.4 below.

(Evens, 2002:195) and they also worked to inspire Christians to have a sense of togetherness, especially during times of persecution (Moss, 2010:15).

It is from the creation and spread of *passiones* as well as from an understanding of the language used within these early Christian texts that this thesis takes its departure. This literary study is made up of three chapters which interlink and provide the reader with a wider picture on early Christian literature and in particular, the nature and function of martyr stories within the growing Christian church. The introductory chapter is of great importance, as not only does it provide the reader with a background to the study, methodology, theoretical points of departure, focus and hypothesis; it also contains definitions of key terms which are instrumental in the reading and understanding of the study. In addition to this, the "trends in scholarship" section aims to provide background in terms of the areas of study which have already been undertaken and also highlights how this study aims to move away from these trends, and ultimately add to the growing amount of literature on the subject.

Within chapter two, the reader is guided through a focused analysis of the *passio* narratives within the canonical gospels and three martyr stories which have been selected for examination within this thesis. This chapter aims at providing sufficient evidence in establishing whether or not the term "proto-narrative" can be used to describe the gospels in relation to later martyr stories. The analysis is carried out in 5 distinct sections (2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6) within the chapter. Additionally, section 2.2 is of great importance and forms the basis of chapter two as it tries to identify a "proto-narrative" template from the gospel accounts of the passion narratives which is then assessed against subsequent martyr stories in order to assess the practicality of the notion of a "proto-narrative".

Chapter three, on the other hand, aims at assessing the importance and function of martyr stories within the early Christian church by analyzing whether these narratives were written with a protreptic and/ or paraenetic purpose in mind. As in chapter two, this chapter assesses the selected martyr *passiones* in order to establish whether or not the use of selected language and terms in the creation of these *passiones* played a strategic and intentional role in the growth and spread of the early Christian church.

I would like to argue that the two types of perspectives used for the literary analyses provided in chapters two and three respectively, meaningfully complement each other. Whereas chapter two

focuses on the line of development of martyr narratives and the extent to which later authors alluded to or imitated the narratives of their predecessors, chapter three investigates how the stories developed in this way functioned in the growth of the early Church.

1.2 Methodology and theoretical points of departure

There are two areas in the research that this study would like to address and make a contribution to. The first area for investigation, is the extent to which Jesus Christ's *passio* as found in the Christian canonical gospels, may be called a "proto-narrative"[7] of the early Christian church by examining how it may have influenced authors of later *passiones.* The second area where the study hopes to make a contribution is to provide a closer examination of martyr *passiones* and specifically to investigate the protreptic-parenetic[8] effects that these stories may have been designed to have on their readers. Through a thorough examination of authorial techniques and the use of rhetoric in a selection of *passiones* this study hopes to assess the role of *imitatio Christi* and similarities between Jesus's and later *passiones* on the one hand, and how the narratives may have been successful protreptic-parenetic tools influencing various aspects of the lives of members (and potential members) of the early Christian church on the other. Furthermore, the study features a brief background section on the "roots of Christian martyrdom" in order to bring scholarship a step closer in understanding whether this phenomenon can locate its origins in a pre-Christian society or whether it is purely of Christian origin.

Early Christian literature has been written by Christian authors with specific purposes in mind for Christian audiences and individuals in order to convert them to Christianity. Scholars[9] who have worked closely with early Christian literature have adopted a traditional approach to martyr

[7] Secondary scholarship does not make use of the term "proto-narrative" in reference to the gospels. However, within this thesis the term is used in order to establish whether or not the gospels can actually be dubbed the "proto-narrative" of early Christian martyr literature.

[8] "Protreptic" comes from the Greek word προτρέπειν which literally means "to turn towards (something)." Protrepsis is a literary genre which attempts to persuade readers to see the value of a certain subject matter as well as to enthuse and convince readers to "turn towards the subject matter" (Görgemanns, 2006).
"Paraenesis" is from the Greek word παραίνεσις and was a term used for advice. However, Starr (2004:77) observes that the term has become an increasingly multivalent in recent scholarship.
These terms will be further discussed in chapter 3.

[9] See Barnes (1968), De Ste. Croix (1963), Keresztes (1964) and Sherwin-White (1952).

literature, with their main target being the extraction of historical information from *passiones* such as: What was the history of the martyr? When, why and where were they martyred? Under what legal circumstances were they martyred? This traditional historical approach towards martyr literature may fruitfully be supplemented through contemporary literary approaches, as martyr literature may be examined within the framework of New Historicism and in particular, Narratology. Within these frameworks emphasis is placed on the literary representation of these narratives by understanding the context within which the *passiones* functioned originally (the domain of New Historicism) and the communicative aims of the authors (the domain of Narratology). These approaches to early Christian literature are still relatively new and this thesis hopes to contribute to the growing body of literature in this particular area.

The specific four martyr stories analysed below have been carefully chosen for examination in order to answer the proposed questions in this study.[10] These stories are: Jesus in the canonical gospels, Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles[11], Polycarp of Smyrna in *Martyrium Polycarpi*[12]and Vibia Perpetua in *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*.[13] The four *passio*[14] stories have been selected firstly, because they are believed to have been modelled on Christ's *passio* and are believed to have acted as protreptic-paraenetic tools in creating followers and martyrs of the early Christian church. Secondly, these stories are also studied because each narrative plays a unique part in the growth of the early church, thus playing an influential role in the formation of early Christian literature. In addition to this, the accounts of Polycarp and Perpetua form a bridge between the New Testament and the early church literature, making the selection of these four narratives in particular, the most important martyr narratives produced by the early Christian church.

[10] Although the author of this thesis has some level of proficiency in Latin and ancient Greek (three years of Classical Latin, two years of Classical Greek and a year of Biblical Greek), the degree is an MA in Ancient Cultures and the author does not attempt analyses of the original languages. The translations of the selected texts from Musurillo (1972) and the NRSV are used instead.
[11] The Acts of the Apostles will be abbreviated as Acts, from here on.
[12] The *Martyrium Polycarpi* will be referred to as *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and abbreviated as *MPol.*, from here on.
[13] The *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* will be referred to as *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* and abbreviated as *Passio. Perp. et Feli.* from here on.
[14] Translations from the canonical gospels and *Acts* have been taken from the NRSV, while texts and translations of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* have been taken from Musurillo (1972).

An examination of the canonical gospels in the New Testament holds an important place in the formation of early Christian martyr literature as they form the foundational narrative on martyrdom and thus play a role in the development of subsequent martyr literature in the early Christian church. Consequently, an examination of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as related in the canonical gospels forms the basis of this study. Scholars who have worked with the canonical gospels have devoted their research to issues like the synoptic problem, the Q source, the historical Jesus and the life and teachings of Jesus, to name a few research areas.[15] However, this thesis will focus on a thorough analysis of the canonical gospels in the hopes of assessing and understanding which aspects of the *passio* of Jesus Christ may have come to represent a "proto-narrative" to which authors of later *passiones* ascribed to.

The Acts of the Apostles relates the story of Stephen, a respected Hellenistic deacon in Jerusalem who had radical ideas about the Jewish temple, law and worship (Bruce, 1979:52). As a result of these radical ideas, and for speaking out against Jewish Laws and the temple, he was charged with blasphemy and was sentenced to execution by stoning (Matthews, 2010:3-4). An examination of Stephens's *passio* is important to this study as he is traditionally regarded as the "proto-martyr"[16] of the early Christian church (Matthews, 2010:66). Scholars who have worked on Stephen as the "proto-martyr" have dedicated their research to Stephen's revolutionary character, his defence speech, the figure of Saul within Acts 7 and 8, the narrative's role in developing a Christian identity and his prayer of forgiveness.[17] This thesis however will focus on a comprehensive analysis of Stephen's *passio* within Acts 6 and 7 in the hopes of illustrating that the author of Stephens's text modelled it of the *passio* of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the study of Stephen's *passio* is of great importance as scholars such as Matthews (2010:56-68), Mitchell (2012:24) and Orr (1913: 20-25) consider the execution scene to be instrumental in the formation of early Christian group identities.

[15] For more on the synoptic gospels, the Q source, the historical Jesus as well as the life and teachings of Jesus see Aune (1987a), Cadbury (1923) Capes (2009), O'Keefe (1959) and Smyth (1962a).
[16] Stephen is often referred to as the "proto-martyr" of the Christian church as he was the first Jesus believer to be killed by those who resisted his testimony (Matthews, 2010:3). However, Bowersock (1995:75) argues that within Eusebius's recording of the martyrs of Lyons in 177 A.D., the first Christians to advance to their deaths in the persecution were simply regarded as πρωτομάρτυρες and that there is no suggestion that the singular form of the noun is in reference to the first ever martyr in Christian history. Furthermore, Bowersock (1995:76) states that it is only within texts from the fourth century onward where Stephen is regarded as πρωτομάρτυς.
[17] See Matthews (2010), Mol (2008), Moss (2010:1-34) and Taylor (2003).

The account of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* plays a central role in this study as it is believed to be one of the earliest surviving accounts of Christian martyrdom in the Roman Empire, after those in the New Testament (Mitchell, 2012:26).[18] The narrative of Polycarp's martyrdom is unique in the sense that the author intended it as a guide to illustrate to audiences the model of "martyrdom according to the gospel" (*MPol*.1) so that fellow Christians would be able to practice *imitatio Christi* (Cobb, 2008:93). Researchers who have worked with *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* narrative have opted to focus on *imitatio Christi*, the date of Polycarp's martyrdom, the developing attitudes toward martyrdom in Smyrna, the authenticity of the narrative as well as the ideological issue of voluntary versus divinely ordained martyrdom.[19] This thesis will delve further into the research surrounding *imitatio Christi* in the narrative of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* in order to assess the ways in which this narrative was influenced by the *passio* of Jesus Christ. In addition to this, an examination of the *passio* is of great importance because not only does it allow scholars to investigate the historicity of the events but according to Hartog (2015:448), if you move away from a historical approach, the text lends itself to a study of the formation of Christian identity in the late second and early third centuries C.E.

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity is the last account that will be analysed. The *passio*, set in early third century Carthage, is believed by some authors to be the only authentic *passio* narrative written by a female Christian martyr[20] during the first three centuries C.E. (Cobb, 2008:95). The narrative portrays the imprisonment and imminent death of a group of catechumens and is filled with raw and real emotions that Perpetua experienced before being executed (Cobb, 2008:95). Due to the rarity of such texts in the early Christian church, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* earns the right to be examined. Scholars who have worked on the *passio* limit their research to interpreting the visions or dreams that Perpetua receives, the masculinization of Perpetua, gendered language within the narrative, Perpetua's absent husband, whether the account was

[18] It was customary for *passiones* of a martyr to be created a considerable length of time after a victim's death. The martyrs in these *passiones* were created to serve the larger religious needs of a community as well as to transform martyrs into saints with significant amounts of power (Mitchell, 2012:3-22).
[19] See Hartog (2015), Kozlowski (2009), Parvis (2006), Smith (2006) and Thompson (2000).
[20] Scholarship is divided on whether the account has been written by Perpetua herself. While some scholars firmly believe that chapters 3-10 of the *passio* is taken directly from her prison diary, other scholars believe that since the work has been edited and the second half of the account is from the perspective of an eyewitness, chapters 3-10 may have also been written from an eyewitness perspective and not necessarily by Perpetua herself. This is further discussed in section 2.5.

written by Perpetua herself and the identity of the editor.[21] Here, as in the case of the other *passiones*, this thesis will investigate how the narrative may have been modelled after Christ's *passio* as well as how it may have acted a "model" for other female (and male) Christians to strive towards.

1.2 Research question, focus and hypothesis

The research question investigated in this thesis can be summarized as follows: To what extent did authors ascribe to an archetypal model in creating *passiones* and were these designed to have a protreptic-paraenetic effect on their audiences? This study expects to demonstrate that the *passio* of Jesus Christ may have been used as an archetypal example for authors of later martyr *passiones*. In addition to this, the study expects to find evidence that will support the notion that martyr literature was used as a protreptic-paraenetic tool, as it played an instrumental role in unifying people belonging to the Christian faith, and was a key source of motivation and comfort for later martyrs and other members of the early Christian church.

1.4 Key terms

In order to fruitfully understand the literary analysis and argument of this thesis, I believe that an understanding of the following key terms are imperative. Often, many varied definitions can be ascribed to a particular term. Thus, the concepts examined here are understood and defined within the context of the study. The terms martyr, martyrology, hagiography, *passio*, gospels, ancient biography, transfiguration, narrative mirroring, protrepsis and paraenesis are examined in this section.

[21] See Bremmer (2003), Heffernan (2012), Hunink (2010), Salisbury (1997) and Shaw (2004).

1.4.1 Martyr

Discussing the term ‘martyr’, the occurrence of martyrdom and locating its origins is not a simple task. Firstly, one requires a working definition of the term itself. Secondly, this definition may be used to compare earlier and later forms of what scholars over the centuries have perceived as the definition of martyrdom, in order to establish its roots and hopefully its original definition. Extensive research has been carried out with regards to this and the results of the search has yielded that the term martyr still finds itself the subject of ongoing debate amongst scholars. This is due to the fact that the definition of martyr itself has evolved over the centuries in response to its social, political and religious surroundings. As a result of this, establishing a definition for the term and locating its origins, whether it be in pre-Christian or early Christian sources proves to be extremely problematic and almost unattainable. Nevertheless, one can attempt to trace the etymology of the term ‘martyr’ in the hopes of moving a step further in establishing a working definition of the term.

Skeat’s (1993:273) *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* traces the modern English term “martyr” back to its original Greek form of μάρτυρ / μάρτυς with a definition of “a witness and one who remembers, records or declares”. As can be seen from Skeat’s definition and in agreement with Frend (1965), Bowersock (1995), Freyne (2003), Sittser (2007), Middleton (2011) and Moss (2012) the original Greek root of the term martyr is not connected to death or dying for one’s faith in any way, but rather as being a witness in a judicial sense. However, with the intensification of Christian persecution and the changing atmosphere in the Empire, Mitchell (2012) believes that the original Greek term μάρτυς evolved from that of being a witness in a judicial sense to someone who has endured torture and has consequently died due to their confession of being a Christian.

In addition to this, Frend (1965), Freyne (2003) and Mitchell (2012) make note that the term μάρτυς is only connected to Jesus in the New Testament once, in the Book of Revelation (1:5) as being a ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστος. Since the Book of Revelation was addressed to the early Christian communities facing persecution and because they were eager to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, persecuted people from these communities began referring to themselves as being ὁ μάρτυς at their time of death, as they believed that they were faithful witnesses to Christ (Mitchell, 2012:23). It is from this intense atmosphere present in the Empire during this time, that people who were sought out from growing Christian communities and prosecuted began referring to themselves as martyrs

at their time of death, as they confirmed their belief in Christ. Thus, in this context, the term martyr will be understood as an individual who was put to death for confirming their belief in Jesus Christ and refusing to offer sacrifice and partake in emperor worship.

1.4.2 Martyrology

Martyrology is the term used to describe a collection of martyr stories from the early Christian church. Sode (2011) points out that initially the term calendaria was used to describe an old list of martyr feast days which was used by individual, regional churches. However, these calendaria slowly developed into what is now known as martyrologies. Martyrologies contain information about particular saint's feast day as well as a collection of martyr names and sometimes stories of the entire early Christian church, and not just that of one region. Middleton (2013:573) points out that early Christian martyrologies listed all those who had given themselves up for Jesus Christ whether they were: sought out, volunteered themselves, drew attention themselves or killed themselves.

1.4.3 Hagiography

Hagiography is defined as a Christian literary genre and according to Wyrwa (2006) it includes "literature covering Christian veneration of saints and scientific, philological–historical research into related issues." Hagiographical accounts not only make mention of a saint's death, but praise their lives as a testimony to their faith and also promote religious edification (Wyrwa, 2006). As will emerge below, hagiography forms the larger umbrella under which other forms of Christian literary works fall, such a *passiones* and *acta*. The selected texts to be examined in this thesis fall under *passiones*.

1.4.4 *Passio*

The Latin term *passio* can be traced back to its earlier form of *patior* which had an original meaning relating to "suffering" and to "enduring". However, with the development and spread of Christianity in the early first century C.E., the term *passio* began to be used to describe an emerging literary genre within the early Church. *Passio* accounts fall under the larger umbrella of hagiography and within Christianity the term *passio* can be understood as a story by a Christian conveying an account of suffering and martyrdom of a fellow Christian or a group of Christians (Berschin, 2006). Berschin (2006) goes on to say that authors who dedicated these accounts to specific individuals have accorded them the highest status. The creation of *passiones* included literature that was either of an interrogative, theatrical or dramatic nature.[22] Cobb (2008:7-10) argues that with a growing interest in early Christian literature *passiones* acted as identity forming texts, in which later audiences of the accounts associate with the feelings, thoughts and circumstances of early Christians. The association with these texts are believed to have contributed to the formation of a Christian identity of "suffering" (Cobb, 2008:7-10).[23] The term *passio* is not commonly used in the contemporary world, however the terms martyr narratives, martyr stories and passion accounts are used to describe this early Christian literary genre.

1.4.5 Gospels

The term "gospel" can be traced back to its original Greek form of εὐαγγέλιον which literally means "good news" and is used to refer to the first four books of the New Testament in the Christian Bible. These books are attributed to the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and make reference to the life and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. They are believed to be written between *circa.* 65-100 CE. According to Smyth (1962a:82), before the literary form of the gospels were made available, their contents were present in the oral preaching of the message of salvation which was spread by the immediate disciples of Jesus Christ after his death. The gospels, both in oral and

[22] See chapter two for further discussion on the creation of *passiones.*
[23] See Perkins (1995) *The suffering self. Pain and narrative representation in the early Christian*, era for a more in-depth discussion on the creation of a "suffering Christian identity".

literary form represent the preaching of the traditional church from the evangelists' point of view as adapted to the needs of the community in which they were spreading this "good news" (Smyth 1962a:83). The gospels referred to in this study are those in literary form.

1.4.6 Ancient Biography

Ancient biography, also known as βίος literature is believed to have originated in the 5th century B.C.E at Athens and was mainly used to describe the career of individuals with some public importance (Aune, 1987:5). Aune (1987:5) quotes Friedrich Leo as postulating that there are two types of ancient biography, both of which can be attributed to Aristotle. Alexandrian biography is the first and has originated with Alexandrian grammarians influenced by Aristotle. This form of biography was designed to introduce the works of great writers of the past (Aune, 1987:5). The second is known as Peripatetic biography and originated in the early peripatetic school, founded by Aristotle. Peripatetic biography can be described as a chronologically ordered narrative that was used mainly to depict the lives of important public figures (Aune, 1987:5).

Capes (2009:2) identifies, in addition to this, a third type of biography called Encomium (from Greek ἐγκώμιον), such works contain characteristic features from both Alexandrian and Peripatetic biography. Encomium biography was aimed at evoking praise for the subject that the work was attributed to by recording the life and elaborating on the greatness of the subject (Capes, 2009:2). Capes argues that all forms of ancient biography were specifically designed to provide its recipient with a pattern to imitate, following from the Greco-Roman tradition in which noble figures were worthy of imitation (2009:2).

The call for imitation is evident from the language used by the authors of early biography and passed down from classical to early Christian authors.[24] It can be argued that the canonical gospels and subsequently early Christian literature, including martyrologies are easily recognizable as a form of ancient biography. The content of these βίοι are Judeo-Christian but their structure and function are Greco-Roman, as will emerge from the analysis below.

[24] The importance of the notion of imitation will be discussed further in chapter 2.

1.4.7 Transfiguration

Transfiguration is the term used to refer to the phenomenon Jesus experienced after his ascent to the mountain and is recounted within the synoptic gospels. According to Lee (2004:1) Jesus is in the company of three disciples when "his physical appearance is changed, metamorphasizing into incandescent light, a light that blazes from his face to clothing". However, this is not the only account of transfiguration within the bible and Browning (n.d.) argues that this episode of transfiguration must be understood within its original Old Testament background.[25] Browning (n.d.) further argues that the phenomenon of transfiguration signifies the union of God with a human, whose life was lived in obedience to God.

As will emerge, an understanding of the term "transfiguration" is an important aspect within the analysis of martyr stories as this phenomenon is present not only within the synoptic gospels, but also with early martyr stories.

1.4.8 Narrative mirroring

"Narrative mirroring", a term coined by Moss in explains how authors of *passiones* presented their martyrs in a "Christly fashion" (Moss, 2010:53), to show in which respects the martyr to imitates Christ (*imitatio Christi*). However, in doing this, some authors did not feel compelled to precisely follow the *passio* of Jesus but still presented their accounts in a similar narrative style with the presence of various biblical elements (Moss, 2010:53). Although the general basis of some *passio* accounts include the same features such as an arrest, a trial, a confession, judgement, possible tortures and visions and lastly an execution scene, authors did not follow this exact sequence of events, even though all of these essential elements were present (Moss, 2010:54). This is the phenomenon called narrative mirroring by Moss (2010). An understanding of the term "narrative mirroring" is important in this study as will emerge when analyzing the *passiones*.

[25] In Exodus 34:29 Moses' face shone with glory after speaking to God upon Mount Sinai.

1.4.9 Protrepsis

Protrepsis can be understood as a term used to describe literature that aims to persuade and convert outsiders towards a new way of life.[26]

1.4.10 Paraenesis

Paraenesis can be understood as a term constituting a type of hortatory communication which has clear benevolent connotations.[27]

A clear and precise understanding of the terms used within the context of this study has been established. The next section will delve into the trends in scholarship surrounding martyrdom, *passiones*, protrepsis and paraenesis, in order to understand what this thesis aims to add to modern scholarship on the subject.

1.5 Trends in Scholarship

An examination of scholarship on the subject matter exposes that identifying historically reliable martyrologies as well as the origins of martyrdom initially predominated the field. W.H.C Frend (1965), ecclesiastical historian and archaeologist, strongly argues that the origins of martyrdom can be found within the history of the suffering of Jewish people. In stark contrast to this, G.W Bowersock (1995) argues that martyrdom is not connected to Judaism in any way and has rather developed within the Greco-Roman world, entwined within its culture and language. Taking up a middle position in this much debated topic is D. Boyarin (1998), who suggests that early sources of Jewish and Christian martyrdom are very similar in their structure, suggesting shared innovation of this phenomenon between both groups.[28] In addition to these trends in research, some scholars have focused on analysing the reasons which lead to the creation of the phenomenon of martyrdom, while others were interested in expanding and establishing chronological lists of martyrologies,

[26] This term is further explored in chapter 3, subsection 3.2.
[27] This term is further explored in chapter 3, subsection 3.3.
[28] See section 1.6 “Roots of Christian martyrdom” for more on this debate.

such as Foxe's (1563) *Book of Martyrs*, Van Braght's (1660) *Martyrs Mirror* and Musurillo's (1972) *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

While many scholars still focus on the very lively debate surrounding the origins of martyrdom, other scholars such as Sherwin-White (1952), De Ste. Croix (1963), Bruce (1979), Bovon (2003), Shaw (2004), Parvis (2006), and Haykin (2007) have opted to take on a more historical approach by focusing on particular martyr stories, the political, social and religious environment of the time that produced martyrs and Roman laws surrounding foreign cults within the Empire.

In addition to this, early 21st century scholars have in their turn opted to examine martyr literature in order to create a broader historical and social perspective on the context of early Christian and present-day martyrs. Scholars such as Haykel (2005), Cook (2007), Post (2009) and James (2014) focus on comparing ancient and modern forms of martyrdom. On the other hand, scholars such as Grig (2004), Middleton (2011) and Mitchell (2012) have opted to focus on definitions of martyrdom, examining how the term martyrdom has evolved and analysing the different types of martyrs that have emerged over the centuries due to changes in political, historical, social and religious settings.

Making a contribution towards the study of early Christian martyrdom and martyr literature is still of relevance as there are always new ways to approach and analyse this early Christian phenomenon. The past decade has seen scholars approach the topic of martyrdom from yet another perspective. This perspective focuses on an analysis of early Christian martyr *passiones*, a neglected branch of early Christian literature and regards *passiones* as captivating stories that document the suffering and courage of the few Christians who encountered death as a Christian martyr. These narratives, often viewed as gruesome stories recounting the death of pious Christians, are now seen as functioning as sophisticated literary works with didactic objectives in mind. The analysis of martyr *passiones* have gained popularity not only with classicists and theologians, but also with sociologists and psychologists, as scholars have begun examining these stories through the lenses of sociological and psychological identification theories.

In her books, Moss (2010:19-21 & 2012:61-64) has employed psychological theory in examining *passiones*. While scholars such as Perkins (1995), Castelli (2004), Cobb (2008:5-22), Fields (2008:100-103), Matthews (2010:4,7&14) and Hartog (2015:436-338) have used sociological theories of group and identity formation as well as gender theory in analysing *passiones.* Currently,

there are three directions within these approaches: the first focuses on *passiones* as successful in creating a Christian group identity of suffering, the second focuses on the extent to which martyrs in their narratives constitute *imitatio Christi*, while a third stream highlights the 'masculinization' of martyrs in the *passiones.*

In her article Franzmann (2009) suggests that there are two different types of *imitatio Christi* which are evident throughout martyr narratives. The first alludes to the martyr's imitation of the spirit and the context of the death of Jesus within the gospels while the second deals with a direct imitation of Jesus' death (Franzmann, 2009:368). Further to this, Franzmann suggests that although the narratives of Stephen, Polycarp and Perpetua seek to imitate Jesus through their life and wisdom, it is only through their deaths that they gain the high status of a "martyr" as there are explicit connections between their narratives and the canonical gospels. In addition to this, authors such as Shaw (1993:3-45), Freyne (2003), Taylor (2003:62-85), Recla (2006:58-63), Smith (2006:22-2), Franzmann (2009) and van Henten (2009) have opted to focus exclusively on martyr *passiones* and the ways in which these narratives were used within the early Christian community.

Adding to these trends in scholarship, this study will investigate the extent to which Jesus Christ's *passio* as found in the Christian canonical gospels may be called a "proto-narrative" of the early church by examining how it may have influenced authors of later *passiones*. Additionally, as will be seen below, this study also hopes to make a contribution in understanding how early martyr *passiones* may have been used as successful protreptic and/ or paraenetic tools influencing the lives of members and potential members of the early Christian church.

The concepts "protrepsis" and "paraenesis" are not uncommon to scholars who research and examine ancient literature, particularly the areas of genre, philosophy, rhetoric, orations, dialogues and apologetics. However, the concepts unfortunately suffer the same fate as that of the term 'martyr', as modern definitions are constantly ascribed to these ancient terms and this has consequently resulted in a tainted understanding of the terms in secondary literature. Paul Hartlich's seminal work titled *De Exhortationum a Graecis Romanisque Scriptarum Historia et Indole* (1889) is not only responsible for providing essential groundwork for the study of protrepsis and paraenesis, but also forms the main ideology behind the dichotomist view of the terms in secondary scholarship.

The separation and understanding of the terms in this manner has since dominated scholarship with many researchers taking their departure from Hartlich's dichotomist postulation. As a result of and in response to this separation, Kotzé (2011:5) notes that two distinct areas of research and focus areas have developed within protreptic and paraenetic studies. With paraenetic studies attracting biblical scholars, and protreptic studies attracting scholars who work on ancient literature and philosophy (Kotzé, 2011:5). However, Malherbe's (1986:121) examination of primary literature in this regard reveals that there was very little distinction between the terms protrepsis and paraenesis in the ancient world. He argues that modern distinctions between the two concepts are "sometimes sharper" compared to ancient uses.

In line with this separation, scholars such as Perdue and Gammie (1990), Popkes (1996), Sensing (1996), Popkes (2004), Engberg-Pedersen (2004) and Starr (2004) have attempted to provide functional definitions for the term paraenesis, particularly within the New Testament, whether it be a broad encompassing definition, or a narrow focused definition. Other scholars such as Malherbe (1986), Stowers (1986), Aune (1987a), Holmstrand (2004), Aasgaard (2004) and Petersen (2004) have opted instead to study possible paraenetic features within the New Testament, with some claiming that entire New Testament books can be considered as belonging to the paraenetic genre.

Taking their lead from Hartlich's seminal work, Jordan (1986) and Slings (1995) attempt to construct a definition of philosophic protreptic. Cook (1994), on the other hand, explores the use of protreptics within a body of early Christian writings. While Schenkeveld (1997), Whittaker (2001) and Kotzé (2004) have devoted their research to locating "protreptic motifs" within selected works. Even more recently, De Jáuregui (2018) has argued that protreptic elements can be located within classical poetry. Tsouni (2018) explores the use of protreptics within Cicero's philosophical works and Damiani (2018) explores Galen's understanding of protreptic literature.

Although there is a large body of existing literature which explores the uses and understanding of the terms protrepsis and paraenesis, adequate examination of these terms within early Christian martyr narratives is both lacking and dated. Thus, the examination of protreptic and paraenetic elements within early Christian martyr narratives can prove to be very important, as it may shed light on the growth and spread of the early Christian church, especially during times of persecution.

1.6 Roots of Christian martyrdom

The origins of martyrdom and its possible pre-Christian link is not the focus of this study. However, uncovering the origins of martyrdom may prove to be an important precursor in understanding and analysing martyr literature. An examination of the subject matter reveals that many scholarly contributions have been made into identifying the origins of martyrdom, in early stages of the research. The works of two twentieth century pioneers have been deeply influential in locating the roots of Christian martyrdom and thus two distinct streams of thought have emerged. As indicated in section 1.5 above, W.H.C Frend (1965), devoted to locating the foundations of martyrdom in a variety of pre-Christian sources argues that the concept of martyrdom originated with the suffering of Jewish people. Frend considers pre-Christian figures such as Daniel from the Old Testament and the Maccabean martyrs from the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal Books as precursors. He also casts his net more widely by considering the Greco- Roman tradition of noble death as illustrated by the figures of Lucretia and Socrates as early examples of martyrdom (1965:65). On the other hand, and in opposition to this, G.W. Bowersock (1995) argues that the notion of martyrdom can locate its origins in the changing cultural, political and social environment of the Roman Empire at the time, and not within early Judaism.

While both theories are substantially validated in their own right, I find that Frend's approach best complements this study as one of the main aims of the thesis is to locate a "proto-narrative". Thus looking at the evidence in support of locating the origins of martyrdom within pre- Christian sources, in particular the accounts of Daniel in the lion's den and the martyrdom accounts of the Maccabean martyrs may prove to be a good start. Although extensive research has been conducted on the terminology and evolution of Christian martyrdom since its inception, only a hand full of scholars such as Schatkin (1974), Boyarin (1998), Van Henten and Avemarie (2002), Moss (2010 & 2012), Wallace and Rusk (2011) and Van Henten (2017) have taken an interest in whether the notion of martyrdom has originated from the development of early Christianity or if it can be found elsewhere in antiquity. Although Christian martyrdom and its possible pre-Christian link is not the focus here, I believe that uncovering a few aspects of its origin may provide an important background to the understanding and analysis of martyr stories.

Frend (1993:287) argues that when trying to establish the origins of martyrdom one should look to the Maccabean revolt and the Maccabean Martyrs as the closest and earliest influencer in developing a Christian pattern of martyrdom. As is reported in the Deuterocanonical books, 2 and 4 Maccabees, the Maccabean martyrs were a group of Jews who were tortured to death for objecting to go against the traditional law of their ancestors.[29] The narrative depicts the stories about the aged scribe Eleazar and a mother and her seven sons, brought before King Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire and forced to eat unclean meat (Himmelfarb, 1998:31). Even after much coercion and torture, they did not waiver in their faith and refused to violate the law of their ancestors, leading to their gruesome and untimely deaths (2 Macc. 6). On the other hand, the account of Daniel's time in the lion's den from the Old Testament, is not one of gory death or martyrdom, but rather of Daniel's perseverance and faith in god (Dan 6:10-28). Moss (2012:39) strongly believes that Daniel's calm resolution in the face of death influenced and instilled ideas of unwavering trust in God and the righteous deliverance from opposing and oppressing powers. Van Henten (2017:18) believes that the accounts of the Maccabean martyrs' resistance and Daniel's trust in his God in the face of adversity, as well as their unwavering faith in their ancestral law exemplified the Jewish way of life and thus fellow Jews began viewing these figures as model representatives of the Jewish nation.

Frend's (1965:44) identification of three ways in which he believes that the accounts of the Maccabean martyrs in particular impacted the formation of early Christian religious ideas yields important insight for this study. The first was the notion of being a personal witness (up to the point of death) to the truth of one's beliefs. The second notion is that of the hope of resurrection of the body after death and the belief that vengeance would be visited on the persecuting powers. The third concept, most notably taken over in Christian accounts of martyrdom was the representation of oppressors as demonic powers. Frend argues, in fact, that without the figures of Daniel in the lion's den and the Maccabean martyrs in particular, a Christian ideology of martyrdom would not have come about. According to him these pre-Christian teachings played a

[29] In an attempt to Hellenize Jerusalem and strengthen his rule, King Antiochus put forward an edict against the traditional religion of Jews ordering them to forsake the laws of their ancestors and to worship Zeus instead. Out of fear of death, many Jews quickly complied with the new laws. However, we are told about a large number of Jews who refused to forsake and abandon their traditional laws, until the death (2 Macc. 6).

major role and have deeply influenced the formation of the ideology of martyrdom in the early Christian church (Frend, 1965:65).

In addition to Frend's claim about the influence of pre-Christian sources on early Christian religious ideas, there are noticeable similarities between the accounts of the Maccabean martyrs and the early Christian martyr stories that will be analyzed within this thesis. These similarities include the themes of refusing to violate and abandon one's religion and the subsequent suffering associated with this refusal, a ritualized speech by the martyr presenting him or herself as a model for others to follow, an illustration of the persecuted religion as being a righteous one or interceding for the forgiveness of his or her oppressors. Other aspects which feature in these stories include, narratives of deliverance and trust in God, of the posthumous recognition and fame of the martyr, as well as the presentation of the martyr's death as a fulfillment of a higher religious calling as derived from these pre-Christian sources. While these themes are commonly associated with Christianity and may seem, to many, to have originated with it, it has to be taken into account that before the development of Christianity similar Jewish religious ideas were in circulation.

From the discussion above, it would make sense to say that the origins of martyrdom as well as martyr literature can be located within early Judaism. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, this study accepts the evidence provided by Frend as locating the origins of martyrdom within pre-Christian sources and in particular within the suffering of Jewish people. The location of the roots of early Christian martyr narratives within pre-Christian sources, namely Judaism, already shows that these ideas have been borrowed and copied from other sources. This may prove to be of importance within the next chapter as the thesis tries to identify whether there was a proto-narrative that was used to guide future authors of martyr narratives.

Chapter 2: Analysis of the *Passiones*: Following a proto-narrative

2.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of martyrdom was at its peak in the Roman Empire over more than two millennia ago, and just as it intrigued the minds of pagans in the Empire, it still intrigues the minds of scholars in the modern world. *Passio* accounts were written about early Christians who were tortured and underwent an extraordinary death in the name of Jesus Christ.[30] *Passiones* were always produced after the death of the martyr, and apart from their exhortative function,[31] these narratives placed a martyr's death within the larger conflict between the growing Christian community and the Roman Empire, depicting it as a battle between good and evil (Moss, 2010:87).

While the *passio* accounts show influence from various literary genres,[32] the biggest influence arguably came from court transcripts,[33] eyewitness and personal diary accounts. These texts were passed on to local church officials who embellished[34] and circulated them within the growing Christian communities in the Empire. Within these newly embellished narratives, martyrs were portrayed as noble and courageous heroes, often with supernatural or otherworldly elements associated with them, who chose to die after enduring terrible tortures in the name of Christ (Mitchell, 2012:21). The circulation of these *passiones* within the early church inspired Christians to be courageous and to remain faithful to Christ in times of doubt or difficulty.

Moss (2010: 53-55) argues that the authors of *passio* accounts presented the martyr as an *alter Christus* figure and that they employed a technique she calls narrative mirroring[35] in these accounts. Fields (2008:100), in agreement with Moss, argues that *passiones* which were read after

[30] This death became known as a martyrdom and the person who underwent this particular death was known as a martyr.
[31] This exhortative function, and specifically the protreptic-paraenetic purpose of the *passiones*, is discussed in the next chapter.
[32] See discussion in chapter 1, section 1.4.4.
[33] Ricciotti (1959:64) discusses how official "trial accounts" were recorded by court officials detailing the interrogation of the martyr before his/her death. These accounts were then kept in archives which were accessible to anyone.
[34] Information included things like the type of tortures, harassment, arrest, length of imprisonment, death and burial that the martyrs faced and underwent. In many cases a supernatural element was added to these accounts (Ricciotti, 1959:64).
[35] See subsection 1.4.8 for more on what narrative mirroring is.

a martyr's death evoked strong emotions in early Christians; these strong emotions Fields ascribes to a large extent to the motifs of *imitatio Christi* in these narratives, rather than to the detailed descriptions of the act of martyrdom itself. Using the notions presented by Moss, this thesis explores the presentation of martyrs as *alter Christus* figures as well as the device of narrative mirroring within the selection of martyr narratives analysed below in subsections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5.

It may be argued that the creation and circulation of *passiones* took place in three contexts. The first was as a response to the needs of the early Christian community who were facing persecution within the empire (Mitchell, 2012:12).[36] The second and third worked hand in hand, as not only were the *passiones* instrumental in keeping the memories of martyrs alive, but they also encouraged others from the community to follow in the martyrs' noble and courageous footsteps (Moss, 2010:15). Although each *passio* account should be examined separately, since they were produced to respond to the needs of specific communities throughout the Empire and at different times, it is not difficult to see the intertextual dependence of specific narratives on preceding stories, especially with repetitive storylines, biblical allusions and instances of *imitatio Christi*.

The next part of chapter 2 consists of four subsections analysing the selected *passiones* in chronological order. The first, and most important section focusses on the *passio* narratives within the canonical gospels and this analysis provides the groundwork for this study. The subsequent sub-sections focus on the martyr narratives of Stephen, Polycarp of Smyrna and Vibia Perpetua respectively. The analysis in these three sections aims to examine *imitatio Christi*, in particular the presentation of martyrs as *alter Christus* figures on the one hand, and narrative mirroring, on the other. This is done in order to ascertain to what extent the passion narratives within the gospels acted as a "proto-narrative" which influenced subsequent martyr narratives, following one of the main aims of this thesis. Alternatively, the passion narratives in the gospels may have acted in a

[36] Once Christianity gained momentum and their practices became known to Roman authorities they were heavily opposed by the state for several reasons with the following two reasons being the most influential. Firstly, Christians sought to join all people under one universal faith and god through conversion. While the second was to promote the separation of religion and the state. As a result of this Christianity began creating a counter-culture to paganism which posed a direct threat to the Romans and the foundations of the Empire. See O' Grady (1991), Plescia (1971) and Wilken (1984) for more discussion on this and other reasons for Christians being persecuted in the Empire.

less direct way as a guideline to the later authors of martyr narratives. The objective of the following analyses is to throw some light on these issues.[37]

2.2 Jesus Christ in the Canonical Gospels[38]

The gospels, originally written in Koine Greek are believed to have been written between 65 and 100 C.E and have been attributed to the four evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (Smyth 1962a:82). These four narratives not only give an account of Jesus' public life and teachings but they also form the foundational narrative on Christian martyrdom and the literature associated with it. The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke form what is known as the synoptic gospels and their content, sequence of events, textual expressions and length are similar.[39] On the other hand, the gospel of John, while broadly similar, has been argued by scholars to have been written without a dependence on the synoptic gospels (Aune, 1987:4). However, all four books, were recognised by the early Christian church as part of their canon and are thus also known as the canonical gospels. It is important to note, as O'Keefe (1959:182-187) argues, that the evangelists were preachers of the early church and not historians who documented the life and deeds of Jesus. The gospels that are attributed to them are sermons, or rather reflections of the life of Jesus Christ, which they wrote to preach to their congregations.[40]

In addition to this, Capes (2009:3) argues that the gospels can be understood as belonging to the category of "ancient biography" which was aimed at providing the reader with a pattern to imitate. This notion was in line with Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions where authors encouraged the imitation of notable figures through literature. The tendency for imitation is clearly noticeable in the New Testament as the gospels call for disciples to "take up the cross and follow Jesus," which was a major function of the gospels in the early Church. In the same vein, and in line with the

[37] It must be noted that although all of the narratives examined here are unique and different in their own right. This thesis only aims to shed light on the similarities and recurring themes from the selected narratives.
[38] All translations from the Christian bible have been taken from NRSV.
[39] According to O'Keefe (1959:174) there is much debate around the canonical gospels and their sources. Many scholars believe that the gospel of Mark (since it was composed first) and a hypothetical gospel known as Q source are the main influencers behind the gospels of Matthew and Luke. For more discussion on the Q source and its influence in producing the synoptic gospels see Filson (1941), Floyd-Honey (1943), Throckmorton, Jr. (1948) and Taylor (2003a).
[40] For more detailed discussion on this see O'Keefe (1959:182-187), Smyth (1962a:82-84) and Rosen (1999).

arguments presented in this thesis, Aune (1987:1) argues that the gospels were written with the propagandistic purpose of either trying to persuade locals to follow Jesus, or to strengthen the belief of those who already belonged to the early Christian community. It is clear that this lies at the basis of the investigation of the protreptic-paraenetic purposes of martyr literature discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

While the canonical gospels cover a wide variety of themes, scholarship of the previous century focused on examining aspects such as the life and teaching of Jesus,[41] the historical Jesus,[42] identifying key locations mentioned within the gospels, the varied meanings arising from crucial phrases and problems faced within the early Christian communities,[43] to mention a few. The current study focuses on the *passio* narratives found within the canonical gospels. An analysis of the outline and sequence of events presented in these *passio* narratives form the basis of this study as they help in assessing and understanding which aspects may have come to represent the "proto-narrative" that *passio* accounts from the first and second centuries C.E may have used, as a template.

Investigations into the borders of the *passio* narratives within the gospels have proven to be extremely difficult as scholarship does not provide clear delineations of these episodes in the gospels. This study makes an attempt to define the parameters of the *passio* narratives within the canonical gospels. The definition given to a "*passio*" in the key terms section 1.4.4 above, defines it as a text relaying a story of suffering and consequently, martyrdom, faced by a Christian or a group of Christians. Keeping this definition in mind while reading through the gospels, it can be argued that, although many other episodes from the life of Jesus are recounted, in each narrative the explicit account of his suffering and therefore *passio* begins with a prayer by Jesus and ends with his crucifixion and subsequent death.

Adhering to these parameters of the *passio* accounts in the gospels, makes it possible to provide an outline of the themes as they are presented as having taken place in all four gospel accounts. This information is provided in table form below (tables 1, 2, 3 and 4) and facilitates the identification of the similarities and differences in the *passio* accounts of the canonical gospels. I

[41] See Gilbert (1905), Case (1925), Jacobs (1996) and Scheffler (2015).
[42] See Smyth (1962), Simpson (1967), Koester (1992) and Sobrino & Drury (1977/8).
[43] See Koester (1968) and Riddle (1941).

also provide a comparison table (5) of all four gospel accounts which can be used as an aid towards determining whether authors of the other *passiones* in question used the canonical *passio* accounts as a "proto-narrative" in producing their *passiones*.

Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below provide the "item" and "detail" of themes per gospel account. In each instance the "item" provides the heading of the event which takes place in the gospel while the "detail" in the right hand column is designed to point out key elements which appear in each version of the gospel. Table 5, on the other hand, provides a side by side comparison of themes from the four gospel accounts. Table 5 is of great importance in the analysis of the selected martyr narratives, as it functions to show the occurrence of the main elements within the canonical gospels such as: Jesus' prayer, betrayal, arrest, presentation to the authorities, interrogation and trial, sentencing, mocking, execution and death, which will be used in the analysis of the subsequent martyr narratives. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, on the other hand, elucidate the key points of the events, all of which are essential to the analysis of the selected *passiones* in the rest of this thesis.

2.2.1 Table 1: The Gospel of Matthew

Item	Detail
1. Prayer	26:36-46 Jesus prays in Gethsemane; Jesus is grieved and agitated; Jesus prays to be saved; Jesus speaks about his betrayal.
2. Betrayal	26:47-49 Judas arrives with a crowd of chief priests and elders; Jesus is betrayed; Jesus addresses the crowd.
3. Arrest	26:57 Jesus is arrested.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	26:59-61 False witnesses are brought against Jesus; 26:65 Jesus charged with blasphemy.
5. Taken to the authorities	26:57-68 Jesus is taken to the High Priest;

	Jesus is presented to Caiaphas; Jesus speaks about the Son of Man. 27:1-2 The chief priest and the elders are determined to have Jesus killed; Jesus is bound and taken to Pilate.
6. Questioning	27:11-14 Pilate questions Jesus about the accusations brought before him; Jesus does not reply.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	27:15-23 Pilate asks whether Barabbas or Jesus should be released; Pilate realises that Jesus was handed over out of jealousy; The crowd demands that Jesus must be crucified.
8. Sentenced to death	27:24-26 Pilate does not want to have Jesus' blood on his hands; Jesus is sentenced to death by crucifixion; Pilate hands Jesus over to the governor's soldiers to be crucified.
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	27:27-31 The soldiers mock Jesus; Jesus is stripped of his clothes; A crown of thorns is placed on Jesus' head; Jesus is spat on by the soldiers.
10. Led to the site of death	27:31 Jesus is taken to Golgotha in order to be crucified.
11. Public execution	27:32-44 Jesus is nailed to the cross; Jesus is taunted by those who pass by and two bandits who were crucified with him.
12. Prayer of forgiveness to persecutors	
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	
14. Death	27:45-55 Jesus cries out to God; Jesus takes his last breath.
15. Stabbing	

2.2.2 Table 2: The Gospel of Mark

Item	Detail
1. Prayer	14:32-42 Jesus prays in Gethsemane; Jesus is distressed and agitated; Jesus prays to be saved; Jesus speaks about his betrayal.
2. Betrayal	14:43-45 Judas arrives with a crowd of chief priests, scribes and elders; Jesus is betrayed; Jesus address the crowd.
3. Arrest	14:46 Jesus is arrested.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	14:55-58 False witnesses are brought against Jesus; 14:64 Jesus is charged with blasphemy**.**
5. Taken to the authorities	14:53-65 Jesus taken to the council; Jesus is presented to the high priest; Jesus speaks about the Son of Man; 15:1 Jesus is bound and led to Pilate.
6. Questioning	15:2-4 Pilate questions Jesus about the charges against him; Jesus does not reply.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	15:6-14 Pilate asks whether Barabbas or Jesus should be released; Pilate realises that Jesus was handed over out of jealousy; The crowd demands that Jesus must be crucified.
8. Sentenced to death	15:15 Jesus is sentenced to death by crucifixion; Pilate hand Jesus over the soldiers to be crucified.
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	15:16-20 Jesus is stripped and given a purple cloak to wear;

	A crown of thorns is placed on Jesus' head; Jesus is mocked by the soldiers.
10. Led to the site of death	15:20 Jesus is led to Golgotha in order to be crucified.
11. Public execution	15:24-32 Jesus is nailed to the cross; Jesus is taunted by those who pass by and two bandits who were crucified with him.
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	
14. Death	15:33:41 Jesus cries out to God; Jesus takes his last breath.
15. Stabbing	

2.2.3 Table 3: The Gospel of Luke

Item	Detail
1. Prayer	22:39-46 Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives; Jesus is in anguish; Jesus prays to be saved; Jesus speaks of his betrayal.
2. Betrayal	22:47-48 Judas arrives with a crowd of chief priests and elders; Jesus is betrayed; Jesus addresses the crowd.
3. Arrest	22:54 Jesus is arrested.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	23:2, 5 False accusations are brought against Jesus; 23:10 The chief priests and scribes falsely accused Jesus before Herod.
5. Taken to the authorities	22:66-71 Jesus is taken to the council; Jesus is taken to the high priest; Jesus makes mention of the Son of Man.

6. Questioning	23:1-5 The chief priests and elders lead Jesus to Pilate; Pilate questions Jesus about the accusations against him; Pilate does not find Jesus guilty; 23:6-12 Pilate sends Jesus to Herod on the account of being a Galilean; Herod questions Jesus; Jesus does not reply.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	23:13-23 Pilate does not find Jesus guilty; Pilate wants to release Jesus; The crowd demands that Jesus must be crucified.
8. Sentenced to death	23:24-25 Jesus is sentenced to death by crucifixion; Pilate hands Jesus over to the governor's soldiers.
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	22:63-65 Jesus is mocked and beat by the men who arrested him; 23:11 Jesus is mocked by Herod and his soldiers.
10. Led to the site of death	23:26-31 Jesus is taken to Golgotha; Jesus address the people following him.
11. Public execution	23:32-43 Jesus is nailed to the cross; Jesus is taunted by those who pass by and one other who is crucified with him.
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	23:34 Jesus prays for forgiveness for his persecutors.
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	23:46 Jesus commits his spirit to God.
14. Death	23:46 Jesus takes his last breath.
15. Stabbing	

2.2.4 Table 4: The Gospel of John

Item	Detail
1. Prayer	17:1-25 Jesus prays for his disciples.
2. Betrayal	18:2-3 Jesus and his disciples enter a garden; Judas approaches with a crowd of soldiers and police; Jesus reveals himself.
3. Arrest	18:12 Jesus is arrested.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	
5. Taken to the authorities	18:12-14 Jesus is taken to the high priest; Jesus is presented to Annas; 18:24 Jesus was bound and sent to Caiaphas.
6. Questioning	18:19 Jesus is questioned by Annas about his teachings; 18:28, 33-38 Pilate questions Jesus; Pilate does not find Jesus guilty; 19:9 Pilate further questions Jesus; Pilate still does not find Jesus guilty.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	18:39 Pilate asks whether Barabbas or Jesus should be released; The crowd demands that they want Barabbas released; 19:6, 15 The crowd demands that Jesus be crucified.
8. Sentenced to death	19:12 Pilate is reluctant to sentence Jesus to death; The crowd further demands Jesus be crucified; Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers.
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	19:2 The soldiers mock Jesus;

	A crown of thorns is placed on Jesus' head; Jesus is stripped and given a purple robe to wear.
10. Led to the site of death	19:17 Jesus is taken to Golgotha in order to be crucified.
11. Public execution	19:18 Jesus is nailed to the cross along with two others placed on either side of him.
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	17:1-5 Jesus asks God to glorify him.
14. Death	19:30 Jesus takes his last breath.
15. Stabbing	19:34 Jesus' side is pierced.

2.2.5 Table 5: Comparison of Canonical Gospels

Item	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. Prayer	26:36-47	14:32-42	22:39-46	17:1-25
2. Betrayal	26:48-49	14:44-45	22:47-48	18:2
3. Arrest	26:50	14:46	22:54	18:12
4. False accounts of blasphemy	26:59-61	14:55-59	23:2, 5	
5. Taken to the authorities	26:57-68, 27:1-2	14:53-65, 15:1-5	22:66-71, 23:1-5	18:12-14,18:28-38
6. Questioning	26:62-63, 27:11-14	14:60-61, 15:2,4	23:13-25	18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10
7. The crowd demands the person's death	27:17, 20-23	15:6-14	23:18, 21, 23	18:39-40, 19:6, 15
8. Sentenced to death	27:26	15:15	23:24-25	19:16
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	27:27-31	15:16-20	22:63-65, 23:11	19:1-4
10. Led to the site of death	27:31	15:20	23:26	19:17
11. Public execution	27:32-44	15:21-32	23:26-43	19:17-30

12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors			23:34	
13. Committing oneself to a higher power			23:46	17:1-5
14. Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30
15. Stabbing				19:34

As can be seen from the tables above, although there are a few variations within the *passio* narratives from the gospels, there is a great deal of similarity between the four accounts. The "items" outlines as provided in the tables, can now be used to examine the *passiones* of Stephen, Polycarp of Smyrna and Vibia Perpetua in order to determine whether the authors of these *passiones* used similar outlines to those of the gospel narratives. As mentioned above, the analyses in the following sections aim to point out the following basic similarities: prayer, betrayal, arrest, presentation to the authorities, questioning, sentencing, mocking, killing and death of the martyr. Instances of narrative mirroring and *imitatio Christi* which fall outside of the gospel *passiones* are made note of as well.

2.3 Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles (6 and 7)

The Acts of the Apostles relates the story of the first recorded martyr of Christianity, Stephen,[44] a respected Hellenistic deacon in Jerusalem whose spiritual and intellectual endowments were recognised by the apostles (Hamon, 1977:292). The story narrates that he was selected by the apostles as one of seven men who were full of faith and the holy spirit, in order to distribute food to widows. Intimidated by the wisdom of Stephen, a few from the "synagogue of the freedmen" (libertini),[45] plotted against him (Acts 6:9-11). As a result of this, he was arrested and brought before a council, in which he allegedly spoke out against Jewish laws, worship and the temple (Acts 6:12 and 7:1-53). Stephen was then charged with blasphemy and stoned to death (Acts 7:54-

[44] Apart from the account of Stephen's death in Acts, there is no known mention of Stephen until Irenaeus, who summarizes his findings from Acts (Matthews, 2010:18).
[45] According to the passage in Acts, this church was made up of Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicians and Asians (Acts 6:9).

58). Stephen's *passio* account is of great importance here as scholars usually refer to him as the "proto-martyr" of the early Church, while this thesis follows the line in scholarship that argues that his *passio* was modelled on that of Jesus, and thus that the latter may rather be regarded as the "proto-martyr".[46]

The account in Acts is believed to have been written by the same author as the gospel of Luke.[47] This has been deduced on the grounds of the following: in the preface of the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles the author dedicates the account to "Theophilus", which could be the name of a specific person, or a reference to an early Christian community (Creamer et al. 2014:1-7). Furthermore, in the Acts of the Apostles, the author speaks about his "first book" in which he gave an account of the life and deeds of Jesus, presumably referring to the gospel of Luke (Walter, 2011 and Bovon, 2011). The Acts of the Apostles is thus understood as an extension of the gospel of Luke, in which the author continues his story after the ministry of Jesus in the gospel, to the ministry of the apostles and the apostolic age.

Although there has been much speculation surrounding the exact date of Stephen's stoning Taylor (2003: 66-68) points out that recent scholarship has narrowed this date to three possible time periods, these being: 31-34 C.E, 36-37 C.E or 40 C.E. Taylor (2003:67) indicates that the first date is popular with scholars who accept the historicity of Paul's involvement in Stephen's death (Acts 7:58 and 8:1). However, this involvement is very questionable. Taylor also notes that the second date is widely supported as it follows the dismissal of Pilate and Caiaphas. This date is, however, solely dependent on the historicity of the Sanhedrin trial (Acts 6:12-14). Finally, Taylor (2003:68) points out that the last date, argued for by D.R. Schwartz (1990) and J.J. Taylor (2000) supports the possibility of a power vacuum in Judea during the Caligula crisis which directly resulted in the high priest being able to exercise greater power than normal. In response to these possible dates Taylor points out that the date of Stephen's death cannot be postulated from the information

[46] There are many debates surrounding Stephen as the "proto-martyr" of the early church. While some scholars agree that Stephen was indeed the first martyr of the early church, other scholars who do not conform to this notion instead argue that it was Jesus Christ who should be known as the "proto-martyr" of the early Christian church. Since this area does not fall under the scope of the study, see Hamon (1977) and Matthews (2010) for detailed discussion on Stephen as the "proto-martyr" and Freyne (2003), Schirrmacher (2010: 296) and Mitchell (2012:23) for discussion of Jesus as the "proto-martyr".

[47] See Dibelius (1941) and Kilgallen (2007) for discussion on the authorship of Luke-Acts.

provided within Acts, as these dates rely on the historicity of the Sanhedrin trial, Paul's involvement and uncertainty surrounding the Caligula crisis.[48]

A thorough study of the account of Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 6 and 7 makes it possible to provide an outline of the series of events as they are presented as having taken place. Thus, table 6 below outlines the events of the *passio* of Stephen. This outline is then examined in relation to the *passiones* in the gospels in table 7 to establish the ways in which the gospel narratives may have been used as a "proto-narrative". As mentioned above, the main elements of the gospel *passiones* as outlined in table 5 above will be used in order to compare events within the selected later *passio* accounts.

2.3.1 Table 6: *Passio* of Stephen

Item	Detail
1.Prayer	
2. Betrayal	
3. Arrest	6:12 Stephen is confronted by the elders and scribes; Stephen is arrested.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	6:11 A few men instigated others to falsely accuse Stephen of speaking blasphemously; 6:13-14 False witnesses are brought against Stephen.
5. Taken to the authorities	6:12, 15 Stephen is taken to the council; Stephen's face becomes transfigured.
6. Questioning	7:1-53 The high priest questions Stephen; Stephen gives a speech recounting the mission of Jesus and persecution of previous Messiahs by the Israelites.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	
8. Sentenced to death	
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	

[48] See Taylor (2003:62-85) for a detailed discussion on this.

10 Led to the site of death	7:56 Stephen makes mention of the "Son of Man"; 7:58 Stephen is dragged outside of the city.
11. Public execution	7:58 Stephen is publically stoned.
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	7:60 Stephen prays to God to forgive his persecutors.
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	7:59 Stephen prays to Jesus to receive his spirit.
14. Death	7:60 Stephen dies.
15.Stabbing	

2.3.1 Table 7: Comparison between the *passio* of Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels

Item	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Stephen
1.Prayer	26:36-47	14:32-42	22:39-46	17:1-25	
2. Betrayal	26:48-49	14:44-45	22:47-48	18:2	
3. Arrest	26:50	14:46	22:54	18:12	6:12
4. False accounts of blasphemy	26:59-61	14:55-59	23:2, 5		6:11, 13-14
5. Taken to the authorities	26:57-68, 27:1-2	14:53-65, 15:1-5	22:66-71, 23:1-5	18:12-14,18:28-38	6:12, 15
6. Questioning	26:62-63, 27:11-14	14:60-61, 15:2,4	23:13-25	18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10	7:1
7. The crowd demands the person's death	27:17, 20-23	15:6-14	23:18, 21, 23	18:39-40, 19:6, 15	
8. Sentenced to death	26:66, 27:26	14:64, 15:15	23:24-25	19:16	
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	27:27-31	15:16-20	22:63-65, 23:11	19:1-4	
10. Led to the site of death	27:31	15:20	23:26	19:17	7:58

11. Public execution	27:32-44	15:21-32	23:26-43	19:17-30	7:58
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors			23:34		7:60
13. Committing oneself to a higher power			23:46	17:1-5	7:59
14. Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30	7:60
15. Stabbing				19:34	

As can be seen from the comparison table 7 above the *passio* of Stephen bears many similarities to the canonical gospels. Both Jesus and Stephen are arrested in Matt 26:50, Mark 14:46, Luke 22:54, John 18:12 and Acts 6:12, respectively. In Matt. 26:59-61, Mark 14:55-59 and Luke 23:2, 5 false accounts of blasphemy are brought against Jesus, just as they have been brought against Stephen in Acts 6:11, 13-14. Although Stephen only appears once before the Jewish Sanhedrin council in order to defend himself against the accusations brought against him in Acts 6:12, Jesus appears both before the Sanhedrin council as well as the Roman authorities in Matt. 26:57-68, 27:1-2, Mark 14:53-65, 15:1-5, Luke 22:66-71, 23:1-5 and John 18:12-14, 28-38.

As Stephen is questioned by the council in Acts 7:1, similarly Jesus is questioned in Matt. 26:62-63, 27:11-14, Mark 14:60-61, 15:2, 4, Luke 23:13-25 and John 18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10. As a result of being questioned by the authorities Stephen provides a speech to the council in Acts 7:1-56, similarly when being questioned by authorities Jesus responds in Matt. 26:64, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:67-69 and John 18:20-21, 23, 34, 36-37, 19:11. Whilst Jesus was led out of the city in order to be crucified in Matt. 27:31-33, Mark 15:20, Luke 23:26 and John 19:17, Stephen was dragged outside of the city by the enraged crowd to be stoned in Acts 7:58 “then they dragged him out of the city”. Both of which result in the public execution of both Jesus in Matt 27:32-44, Mark 15:21-32, Luke 23:26-42, John 19:17-30 and Stephen in Acts 7:58.

In addition to these similarities, three further parallels can be mentioned here. In Matt. 26:42, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, 23:46 and John 17:1-25 Jesus commits his spirit to a higher power (his father).

Likewise, Stephen commits his spirit to a higher power (Jesus) in Acts 7:59 "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit". Stephen cries out to Jesus in Acts 7:60 to forgive his persecutors "Lord, do not hold this sin against them". Following the example of Jesus in Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" who also prays that compassion be shown to his persecutors. As will become evident, the prayer committing oneself to a higher power as well as the prayer of forgiveness, become defining features in later martyr stories, as will be analysed below. Lastly, just as Jesus suffers a painful public death surrounded by witnesses in Matt. 27:50, Mark 15:37, Luke 23:46 and John 19:30, Stephen suffers the same fate in Acts 7:60.

Furthermore, three instances of narrative mirroring can be noticed between the *passio* accounts of Jesus and Stephen. These include: a confrontation by a crowd of Jewish elders and scribes before the persecuted person is arrested as can be seen in Matt. 26:55-56, Mark 14:48-49, Luke 22:52-53, John 18:3-8 and Acts 6:12. In Acts 7:55-56 Stephen explicitly mentions the "Son of Man", just as Jesus does in Matt. 24:30, Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27. Lastly, the description of Stephen's face as being "angelic" in Acts 6:15 may likely be a direct reference to the transfiguration of Jesus in Matt. 17:2, Mark 9:3 and Luke 9:3.

In addition to this, Franzmann (2009:369) believes that the author of Acts not only intended for Stephen's death to be an imitation of Jesus' but also sought to present Stephen as an imitation of Jesus in life and ministry as well. This has been illustrated in the way Stephen was presented before his stoning. He is described as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit in Acts 6:5, being full of grace and power, performing wonders and signs among the people in Acts 6:8 and speaking with wisdom and the Spirit in Acts 6:10. Each of these elements show similarity to the ministry of Jesus. In agreement with Franzmann, Matthews (2010:74) suggests that there is a noticeable overlap between the gospel *passiones* by Matthew and Mark and that of Stephen, affirming that Jesus' *passio* could have been used as a model for the death of Stephen. Additionally, Jackson (1930:285) claims that if the defence speech (Acts 7:2-50) is removed from Acts, one can notice the "intentional parallelism" between the trial scenes of Jesus and Stephen. Moreover, Jackson (1930:56) argues that in order to create an "early Christian identity" it was necessary for authors to portray "Christ like suffering" in early Christian literature.

In support of the argument that the narrative of Stephen represents *imitatio Christi*, Matthews (2010:77) claims that Stephen is presented as a perfect martyr of the early Church not only through

his *imitatio*, but also through his orthodoxy. As a result of Stephen's perfect martyrdom, Mitchell (2012:24) argues that his *passio* played an important role in the history of the Christian church. In addition to this, Matthews (2009:123) notes that the words used within Stephen's dying prayer is closely but not precisely modelled on the words of Jesus. Thus, also through Stephens prayer, he himself is invoking *imitatio Christi* (Matthews, 2009:135).

Martyr literature and *passiones* eventually came to play a highly prominent role in the growth and development of early Christianity. It is possible to trace how the key elements as outlined above become constant features within later *passiones*, while they were also heavily embellished and widely circulated within the early Christian church for various purposes.

2.4 Polycarp of Smyrna in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*

Polycarp was a famed apostolic teacher, a bishop and a leading figure in the Smyrnaean church of Asia Minor in the 2nd century C.E (Moss, 2013:63). He was a powerful personality in the church because of his link to the apostles[49] and his death as a martyr of Christ. The date of Polycarp's death has been much disputed in scholarship. However, recent consensus supports claims made by J.B Lightfoot who postulates that Polycarp was martyred between 155-156 C.E.[50] *Martyrium Polycarpi* is the official title of Polycarp's *passio* account and it is in the form of a letter from the church at Smyrna to the church at Philomelium (Parvis, 2006:105). The account is attributed to an eyewitness who claims to have been present at the execution and has written about the events not long after. The narrative is acknowledged as the oldest martyrdom account outside the New Testament (Mitchell, 2012:26) and in addition to this, both Moss (2013:94-95) and Smith (2006:179) agree that it is the first account in which the term "martyr" is used in its technical sense and not as being a legal witness.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp has been preserved and passed down to the modern world in two versions. The first, as recorded in the epilogue of the text used in this study, is believed to have

[49] According to Moss (2012:58), Polycarp was a companion of Ignatius of Antioch who was a student of John the apostle. Many followers in the early church saw this relationship as a vital link between the apostles and apostolic fathers, thus viewing Polycarp as a guarantor of the apostolic tradition.
[50] For more discussion on the differing dates of Polycarp's death see Barnes (1976), Thompson (2000) and Parvis (2006).

been copied by a figure known as Pionius. Pionius explains that the text in his possession was originally transcribed by Gaius from a document belonging to Irenaeus. Socrates from Corinth then made a copy of Gaius' text and lastly Pionius made a copy of Socrates' text (*MPol.*, 22:1-3). The second text is preserved by Eusebius in his *Church History* (IV. 15:1-46). However, Moss (2012:58) points out that this text has been highly criticized as it appears to be heavily summarised version of Pionius' account.

While the main focus in this thesis is on the figure of Polycarp and his *passio*, it is worthy to make note of two other supporting figures within the account. The first is Germanius, who is described as being devoured by beasts (*MPol.*, 3:1-2).[51] The second figure, who is of more interest to this study is a Phrygian by the name of Quintus. Quintus is described as being a voluntary martyr (ἰδὼν τὰ θηρία ἐδειλίασεν)[52] (*MPol.*, 4). The figure of Quintus and his actions play a very important role in the *passio* as the author compares Quintus' failed martyrdom with that of Polycarp (which is κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μαρτύριον)[53] (*MPol.*, 1:1).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp was reproduced and distributed to many early Christians in order to provide others within the community with an example of "martyrdom in accordance with the gospels".[54] However, when the author of the *passio* noted that Polycarp's martyrdom was "according to the gospels", was he merely referring to Polycarp's successful martyrdom, which could be interpreted as "according to the gospels" in comparison to Quintus' failed voluntary martyrdom, or was he referring to similarities in the narrative, such as the sequence and events leading to Polycarp's martyrdom?

In order to understand whether the author's words were meant in an ideological or literal sense or both, an examination of the series of events leading to Polycarp's arrest and death is necessary. Once an outline of the events has been established in table 8 below, these important moments will be compared with the main elements of Jesus' death as outlined in table 9 in order to make some

[51] There is very little information about this character. The narrative does not state when or how he was arrested and brought to the arena. It does however make mention that Germanicus is a young male and even though the proconsul pleaded with him to apostatize, he refused and proceeded to pull the wild beasts over himself.
[52] "And when he saw the wild animals he turned cowardly"
[53] "witness in accordance with the Gospel"
[54] For more discussion on Polycarp's "martyrdom according to the gospels" see Cobb (2008:93), Hartog (2015:443) and Moss (2010:10).

judgement as to whether the *passiones* from the gospel accounts were used as a template for the creation of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

2.4.1 Table 8: *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*

Item	Detail
1.Prayer	5:1 Polycarp prays for everyone, day and night; Polycarp foresees his death; 7:2 Polycarp requests an hour to pray.
2. Betrayal	6:1-2 Polycarp is betrayed by one in his household; His location is revealed.
3. Arrest	7:1-3 The police captain and cavalry close in on Polycarp's location; The police captain's name is Herod; Polycarp feeds his captors; 8:1 Polycarp is arrested; Polycarp is led into the city on a donkey.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	
5. Taken to the authorities	
6. Questioning	9:2-3 Polycarp is questioned by the governor; 10:1-2 The governor tries to persuade Polycarp to curse Christ; Polycarp offers to teach the governor about the Christian doctrine; 11:1-2 The governor threatens Polycarp.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	3:2 A mob of Pagans and Jews demand Polycarp's death.
8. Sentenced to death	12:2-3 Polycarp is filled with courage and grace;

	Polycarp is sentenced to death by fire.
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	13:2 Polycarp removes his clothing.
10. Led to the site of death	8:3, 9:1 Polycarp is led into the amphitheatre.
11. Public execution	14:1 Polycarp is bound to the stake; 15:1-2 Polycarp's body is set alight; The flames do not engulf Polycarp's body.
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	14:1-3 Polycarp commits himself to Jesus.
14. Death	16:1 Polycarp dies.
15.Stabbing	16:1 Polycarp's body is daggered.

2.4.2 Table 9: Comparison between *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the Gospels

Item	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Polycarp
1.Prayer	26:36-47	14:32-42	22:39-46	17:1-25	5:1, 7:2
2. Betrayal	26:48-49	14:44-45	22:47-48	18:2	6:1-2
3. Arrest	26:50	14:46	22:54	18:12	7:1-3, 8:1
4. False accounts of blasphemy	26:59-61	14:55-59	23:2, 5		
5. Taken to the authorities	26:57-68, 27:1-2	14:53-65, 15:1-5	22:66-71, 23:1-5	18:12-14,18:28-38	
6. Questioning	26:62-63, 27:11-14	14:60-61, 15:2,4	23:13-25	18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10,	9:2-3, 10:1-2, 11:1-2
7. The crowd demands the person's death	27:17, 20-23	15:6-14	23:18, 21, 23	18:39-40, 19:6, 15	3:2
8. Sentenced to death	27:26	15:15	23:24-25	19:16	12:3
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	27:27-31	15:16-20	22:63-65, 23:11	19:1-4	13:2

10. Led to the site of death	27:31	15:20	23:26	19:17	8:3
11. Public execution	27:32-44	15:21-32	23:26-43	19:17-30	14:1, 15:1-2
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors			23:34		
13. Committing oneself to a higher power			23:46	17:1-5	14:1-3
14. Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30	16:1
15. Stabbing				19:34	16:1

As is seen in table 9 above, there are many similarities between *MPol.* and the *passio* narratives from the canonical gospels. Just as Jesus prays before he is arrested in Matt. 26:36-47, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46 and John 17:1-25, Polycarp also prays in *MPol*.5:1 "day and night he did little else but pray for everyone and for all the churches scattered throughout the world" and again in *MPol*.7:2 "he stood up and began to pray facing the east … he was unable to stop for two hours", in the presence of his captors. In the gospels, we read that Jesus was betrayed by Judas who was one of his disciples in Matt.26:48-49, Mark 14:44-45, Luke 22:47-48 and John 18:2. Similarly Polycarp was betrayed by one of his maidservants in *MPol*.6:1-2 "they seized two slaves, and one of them told everything … he had betrayers in his own household". Matt.26:50, Mark 14:46, Luke 22:54 and John 18:12 narrate that Jesus was sought out by a crowd of Jews and law officials before being arrested likewise; Polycarp was also sought out before being arrested in *MPol*.7:1-3. Polycarp is questioned multiple times by the Roman authorities present in Smyrna regarding his status as a Christian in *MPol*.9:2-3, 10:1-2 and 11:1-2, just as Jesus was sent back and forth, questioned by both Roman and Jewish authorities regarding his religious identity and self-identification as the "Son of God" or "King of the Jews" in Matt.26:62-63, 27:11-14, Mark 14:60-61, 15:2,4, Luke 23:13-25 and John 18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10.

Matt.27:17, 20-23, Mark 15:6-14, Luke 23:18, 21, 23 and John 18:39-40, 19:6, 15 relay that a crowd of Jews demanded that Jesus be put to death instead of the criminal Barabbas. The same can be noticed in *MPol*. 3:2-3, where a crowd of Jews demand that Polycarp be sought out on

account of being a Christian "Away with these atheists! Go and get Polycarp!". As a result of their deaths being demanded by unruly crowds, both Jesus and Polycarp are sentenced to a public death by Roman officials in Matt. 27:26, Mark 15:15, Luke 23:24-25, John 19:16 and *MPol*. 12:3, respectively. Before Jesus and Polycarp are put to death, both are stripped of their clothing, and while Polycarp is only stripped of his clothing, Jesus is mocked by the governor's soldiers, spat on and had a crown of thorns placed upon his head in Matt. 27:27-31, Mark 15:15-20, Luke 22:63-65, 23:11, John 19:1-4 and *MPol*. 13:2.

Thereafter, Matt. 27:31, Mark 15:20, Luke 23:26 and John 19:17 recount that Jesus was led to Golgotha which was to be the site of his death, likewise *MPol*. 8:3 states that Polycarp was led into the amphitheatre which was to be the site of his death. Although the methods of execution were different for Jesus and Polycarp with Jesus being sentenced to death by crucifixion and Polycarp to death by burning, both figures suffered public executions with witnesses as observed in Matt. 27:32-44, Mark 15:21-32, Luke 23:26-43, John 19:17-30 and *MPol*. 16:1.

In addition to these similarities, two others may be mentioned here: both Polycarp and Jesus commit their spirits to a higher power, with Polycarp committing his to Jesus in *MPol.*14:1-3 and Jesus committing his to God in Matt. 26:42, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, 23:46 and John 17:1-25. Lastly, both Polycarp in *MPol.* 16:1 "they ordered a confector to go up and plunge a dagger into the body" and Jesus in John 19:34 "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear" are stabbed after their initial methods of execution have been conducted.

Furthermore, there are six instances of narrative mirroring that can be noticed within *The Martyrdom of Polycarp.* These include: Polycarp foreseeing his death in *MPol*. 5:2 just as Jesus had in Matt. 16:21, 17: 22, 20:18-19, Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34, Luke 9:22, 9:44, 18:32-33 and John 8:21. Herod features in Luke 23:6-12 as the ruler of Galilee and to whom Jesus was taken to be questioned, similarly the name Herod features in *MPol*. 6:2 as the name of police captain who had been eager to arrest Polycarp and who briefly questions him before he is taken to the governor. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey in Matt.21:6, Mark 11:7, Luke 19:35 and John 12:14 has also been recreated in *MPol.* 8:1 "they put him on a donkey and thus conducted him into the city" in the narrative of events after Polycarp was arrested. Just as Jesus answered the questions posed to him by the authority's in Matt. 26:64, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:67-69 and John 18:34, 36-37, 19:11, the same can be observed in *MPol*. 9:3, 10:1-3, 11:1-2. In John 19:10 during Pilate's questioning

of Jesus, he begins to threaten Jesus "do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you" and the same occurs in *MPol*. 11:1 when the governor also begins to threaten Polycarp "I have wild animals, and I shall expose you to them if you do not change your mind". Lastly, the description of Polycarp being filled with "grace" in *MPol.* 12:1 may be regarded as a reference to the transfiguration which Jesus also undergoes in Matt. 17:2, Mark 9:3 and Luke 9:3.

Cobb (2008:93), Parvis (2006:108), Stroumsa (2008:148) and Thompson (2000:47) agree that Polycarp's narrative bears many similarities with the gospels. Further to this Hartog (2015:443) argues that the author of *MPol*. clearly presents Polycarp's character as a model and imitator of Christ which can be noticed through the use of "language of imitation" appearing throughout the narrative. As a result of this, Hartog (2015:449) explains that *MPol.* does not portray Polycarp as an individual figure but rather as how the reader should understand and view him, as an imitator of Christ and someone who appeals to the early Christian community. It is clear to see that the author's claims of "martyrdom according to the gospels" was meant to be understood in both a literal and ideological sense.

In addition, Capes (2009:17) argues that Polycarp's mirroring of Jesus' death appears as a corrective against Christians who did not wait for their calling and instead gave themselves up as voluntary martyrs. furthermore, the author has used the language of *imitatio Christi* throughout the entire narrative in describing Polycarp as a righteous man who lived an exemplary life and died an honourable death in accordance with the gospels. Thus, it can be argued that the canonical gospels were in fact used as a blueprint for *The Martyrdom of Polycarp.*

However, in opposition to this stance and rejecting the reading of *MPol.* from a strictly biblical approach, Cobb (2014:224) argues that readers who are not familiar with the Christian canon will be able to identify allusions to the death of Socrates (*imitatio Socrati*) in *MPol.* as well. Cobb (2014:227) argues that this can be justified by the similarities found between the two narratives. These include: both figures were described as being noble and being charged with atheism; both refused to flee and refused to be persuaded; both took control of their own death (Socrates by requesting hemlock and Polycarp by removing his own clothes); both prayed before dying and both are described as being old and as models for others to follow.[55] These arguments by Cobb

[55] For the full discussion on this see Cobb (2014).

add context to the current discussion. They demonstrate how the limitation of narrative motives in later accounts was deeply embedded in ancient literary culture.

2.5 Vibia Perpetua in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity narrates the arrest and execution of a group of young catechumens, Carthaginian Christians, in celebration of Caesar Geta's birthday during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus in *c*203 C.E. Vibia Perpetua and her companions namely, Revocatus and Felicity,[56] Saturninus, Secundulus and Saturus[57] are believed to have been arrested since it became illegal to convert to Christianity under emperor Septimius Severus (Heffernan, 1992:194 and Polcar, 2017:196).[58] As reported in the *passio*, Vibia Perpetua was around 22 years old, newly married,[59] had a good upbringing and was liberally educated. Her parents were still alive, she had two brothers[60] and an infant son who was still suckling her breast at the time of her imprisonment. Perpetua's *passio* is one of the most studied and famous martyr stories due to its literary claims, rendering it a rarity from the early Christian church. Moreover, Shaw (1993:8) argues that, although females were frequently martyred, their chances of being "memorialized" within early Christian literature were not high.

The *passio* survives in both Latin and Greek. Moss (2012:130) argues that the Greek version is a loose translation of the Latin version, as it differs slightly in amplifying the gladiatorial scenes and the *imitatio Christi* and in softening the distinction between martyrs and angels. The complete *passio* can be broken down into four composite parts that have been attributed to three different authors namely, Vibia Perpetua (3-10), Saturus (11-13) and an unknown eyewitness who is also the editor (1-2 and 14-21) (Van Den Eynde, 1965:24).[61] Perpetua's contribution is in the form of

[56] Both of them were slaves. Felicity was pregnant at the time of her arrest.
[57] Saturus was not arrested with Perpetua and her companions, but after their arrest, he handed himself to the Roman authorities on account of being a Christian.
[58] In addition to these Christians who were arrested, other figures mentioned in the passio include Perpetua's parents, brother and aunt, Tertius and Pomponius, Hilarianus, Minucius Timinianus, Dioncrates, Prudens, Jucundus, Saturninus, Quintus, Bishop Optatus, Aspasius a presbyter and teacher and lastly Rusticus.
[59] The identity of her husband is not revealed. However, this may be a theological omission as Perpetua is described as a "bride of Christ" in the *passio.*
[60] One of which is believed to have been a catechumen although, not arrested with Perpetua and her companions.
[61] It is evident from the account that the editor is a highly skilled writer.

a personal prison diary and recounts her family relationships, in particular, meetings with her father while in prison, her fears and anxiety for her infant son, the trial, her imprisonment and the visions/dreams[62] she receives.[63] Saturus's contribution on the other hand, recounts a vision he received while in prison regarding heavenly matters, angels, martyrs and rewards after death.[64] In addition to this, the unknown editor's introduction and conclusion not only shapes the reader's interpretation of the text, but also recounts the birth of Felicity's premature daughter, the hardships of being in prison and the final execution scene of the martyrs (Van Den Eynde, 1965:24).[65]

The fact that Vibia Perpetua's contribution is in the form of a first person prison diary account, makes the *passio* one of the earliest extant examples of autobiography[66] and early Christian literature written by a woman (Cobb, 2008:95). In addition to this, Moss (2012:130-134) argues that the *passio* is also recognised as one of the earliest narratives with Christian Latin diction from the early church in Africa, adding to the rarity and importance of the narrative. Scholars such as Heffernan (1995) and Hunink (2010) are sceptical regarding the authorship of Perpetua and Saturus's account, resulting in much debate surrounding the matter. Hunink (2010:149) even argues that the account could have been written by an eyewitness to whom Perpetua narrated events while she was imprisoned. However, Moss (2013:118) suggests that prisoners being able to gain access to materials such as a stylus and paper while being imprisoned, may not be as unbelievable as we may think.[67]

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity does not only focus on Perpetua, her sufferings and death, but it also recounts the martyrdoms of her companions as well. However, the attention in this section will only focus on Perpetua. A thorough study of *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* makes it possible to outline the main set of events as they are believed to have taken place in the amphitheatre at Carthage, tabulated in table 10 below. The main items as reflected in table 10 will

[62] Salisbury (2004) notes that in his "Treatise on the Soul" Tertullian offers the first Christian explanation of dreams as a relationship between souls, sleep and dreams. In his analysis of dreams, he tries to explain different types of dreams one may experience and he notably focuses on the origins of a dream. See Salisbury (2004:76-93) for more on this.
[63] Many scholars reject the notion that Perpetua was indeed the author of her account. See Moss (2013:118).
[64] Within *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (11:1), the unknown editor notes that Saturus has written an account of the dream / vision he receives while being imprisoned.
[65] For a full discussion on the composite parts of the *passio* and their authors see Heffernan (1992:185-230).
[66] Shaw (1993:16) argues that Perpetua's contribution greatly influenced the way in which subsequent "autobiographical accounts of martyrdom" were written, especially in North Africa.
[67] See Moss (2013:118) for a full argument about the issue of the availability of writing materials.

then be compared with the main themes from the gospel *passiones* in table 11, in order to determine to what extent Perpetua[68] and the other contributors of the narrative may have been influenced by other early Christian literature which was in circulation at the time.

2.5.1 Table 10: *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*

Item	Detail
1. Prayer	3:4 Perpetua was distressed by her father constantly trying to draw her away from Christianity; Perpetua prays because of her father's departure; 7:1, 9, 10 Perpetua prays for her brother Dinocrates.
2. Betrayal	
3. Arrest	2:1 Perpetua is arrested along with other catechumens.
4. False accounts of blasphemy	
5. Taken to the authorities	
6. Questioning	6:3-4 The governor tries to convince Perpetua to offer sacrifice to the emperor; The governor asks Perpetua whether she is a Christian.
7. The crowd demands the person's death	18:9 The crowd becomes enraged and demands that convicted Christians be scourged before the gladiators.
8. Sentenced to death	6:6 Perpetua and her companions are sentenced to death by wild beasts.
9. Mocked and/or stripped of clothing	10:7 In prison during Perpetua's third vision, she sees herself being stripped of her clothing; 20:2

[68] Presuming that she is indeed the author of her account.

	In real life, Perpetua is stripped naked and a net like garment is placed over her body.
10. Led to the site of death	10:4 In prison during Perpetua's third vision, she sees herself being led into the amphitheatre; 18:1 In real life, Perpetua is led into the amphitheatre; Perpetua has a shining countenance.
11. Public execution	20:3 Perpetua is tossed by a wild heifer but does not die; 20:10 Perpetua gives words of encouragement to other Christians.
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	
13. Committing oneself to a higher power	5:6 Perpetua tries to reassure her father that all will happen as God wills since she has committed herself to him.
14. Death	21:9 Perpetua cried out as she is struck on the bone; Perpetua guided the sword of the young gladiator to her throat; Perpetua dies.
15.Stabbing	21:9 Perpetua's throat is cut by a young gladiator.

2.5.2 Table 11: Comparison between *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* and the Gospels

Item	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Perpetua
1.Prayer	26:36-47	14:32-42	22:39-46	17:1-25	3:4, 7:1, 9, 10
2. Betrayal	26:48-49	14:44-45	22:47-48	18:2	
3. Arrest	26:50	14:46	22:54	18:12	2:1
4. False accounts of blasphemy	26:59-61	14:55-59	23:2, 5		

5. Taken to the authorities	26:57-68, 27:1-2	14:53-65, 15:1-5	22:66-71, 23:1-5	18:12-14,18:28-38	
6. Questioning	26:62-63, 27:11-14	14:60-61, 15:2,4	23:13-25	18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10	6:3-8
7. The crowd demands the person's death	27:17, 20-23	15:6-14	23:18, 21, 23	18:39-40, 19:6, 15	18:9
8. Sentenced to death	27:26	15:15	23:24-25	19:16	6:6
9. Mocked and/ or stripped of clothing	27:27-31	15:16-20	22:63-65, 23:11	19:1-4	10:7, 20:2
10. Led to the site of death	27:31	15:20	23:26	19:17	10:4, 18:1
11. Public execution	27:32-44	15:21-32	23:26-43	19:17-30	20:3
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors			23:34		
13. Committing oneself to a higher power			23:46	17:1-5	5:6
14. Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30	21:9
15. Stabbing				19:34	21:9

At first, a simple reading of *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* may seem as if it is an entirely unique composition, especially with the first person accounts by Perpetua and Saturus. However, as one delves deeper into analysing the *passio* many similarities can be noted between Perpetua's account and the gospel *passiones*, as can be seen in table 11 above. Throughout the *passio*, it is noticed that Perpetua prays at different times and for different reasons in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 3:4 and 7:1,9-10. This corresponds with Jesus praying in Matt. 26:36-47, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:47-48 and John 17:1-25. Although the author does not provide specific details on Perpetua's arrest, she is arrested in 2:1 "a number of young catechumens were arrested", just as Jesus was arrested in Matt. 26:50, Mark 14:46, Luke 22:54 and John 18:12. In Matt.26:62-63, 27:11-14, Mark 14:60-61, 15:2,4, Luke 23:13-25 and John 18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10, we read that Jesus was questioned about his religious identity: whether or not he was the "Son of God" and "King of Jews". Like in

all the previous martyr narratives, also in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 6:3-8 Perpetua is questioned by a figure representing the state about whether or not she is a Christian "are you a Christian? said Hilarianus".

Perpetua is immediately sentenced to death by wild beasts upon confessing that she is a Christian in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 6:6 "we were condemned to the beasts". This of course differs in detail from the process followed in the case of Jesus, since Pilate was reluctant to have him put to death. Jesus was nonetheless sentenced to death (Matt. 27:26, Mark 15:15, Luke 23:24-25 and John 1:16). Thus both Jesus and Perpetua were sentenced to death by the Roman authorities. Also, in terms of the crowd participation motif which occurs in all the previous passion accounts, is also present here. It is a crowd of Jews and Pagans who demand that Jesus be imprisoned and crucified in place of Barabbas (Matt. 27:17, 20:23, Mark 15:6-14, Luke 23:18, 21, 23 and John 18:39-40, 19:6, 15). The same can be noted in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 18:9, where it is presumably a crowd of pagans in the amphitheatre who demands that the Christians be finished off by gladiators "the crowds became enraged and demanded that they be scourged before a line of gladiators".

Jesus was severely mocked and stripped of his clothing in Matt. 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, Luke 19:1-4 and John 10:7, 20:2. Although Perpetua was not mocked, she was also stripped of her clothing in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 10:7 "my clothes were stripped off" and 20:2 "they were stripped naked".[69] The first instance occurs during her vision in which she had to battle with a dragon, and the second instance was when she was to be killed at the amphitheatre. As Jesus was led to Golgotha which was to be the site of his death in Matt. 27:31, Mark 15:20, Luke 23:26 and John 19:17, Perpetua was also led from the prison into the amphitheatre which was to be the site of her death *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 10:4 and 18:1. The first time is described as part of her vision, and the second time was when she was to be killed at the amphitheatre in real life.

In addition to these similarities, two others can be noted here. Although the methods of execution were different for Jesus and Perpetua, with Perpetua being sentenced to death by wild beasts and Jesus to death by crucifixion, both figures suffered public executions with witnesses in Matt. 27:32-44, Mark 15:21-32, Luke 23:26-43, John 19:17-30 and *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 20:3. And lastly, both Perpetua and Jesus are stabbed after their initial forms of execution are conducted. In John

[69] It must be noted that although Perpetua was stripped of her clothing, the fact that she is a female makes this a very different experience as compared to the stripping of Jesus' clothes.

19:34, we read that after Jesus was crucified, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear". While in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 21:9, we read that since Perpetua did not die from being exposed to the wild heifer, her throat was slit by a young gladiator "she took the trembling hand of the young gladiator and guided it to her throat".

Furthermore, there are three instances of narrative mirroring which can be noticed in the *Passio Perp. et Feli*. At the beginning of the *Passio Perp. et Feli.* In 3:6 Perpetua is described as being in great distress "and I was terrified" and the same can be noted in Matt. 26:37-38, Mark 14:33-34 and Luke 22:44 where Jesus is deeply distressed and in anguish. In an interesting mirroring of Jesus' prediction of his own death Jesus predicts his death a total of 10 times within the gospels in Matt. 16:21, 17: 22, 20:18-19, Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34, Luke 9:22, 9:44, 18:32-33 and John 8:21. Perpetua in fact also predicts her own death through the incorporation of her visions into the narrative in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 4:10. In Matt. 27:26, Mark 15:15, Luke 23:24-25 and John 19:16 Jesus is calmly composed upon learning that he will be sentenced to death by crucifixion. The same can be noted in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 6:6 as Perpetua is described as in "high spirits" upon learning that she will be condemned to wild beasts. Lastly, the description of Perpetua with "shining countenance and calm step" in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 18:1-2 may likely be a be a mirroring of the transfiguration which Jesus also undergoes in Matt. 17:2, Mark 9:3 and Luke 9:3.

In addition to the similarities and narrative mirroring as mentioned above, scholars such as Franzmann (2009:368), Heffernan (1992:203) and Mitchell (2012:35) agree that *imitatio Christi* is prevalent throughout *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*. Franzmann (2009:368) even argues that the author uses "deliberate and explicit" devices to emphasize those features of the *passio* in order to create a story that will imitate Jesus'. Although *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* may at first sight appear vastly different from the gospel *passio* narratives, it can be argued that this can be attributed to the fact that it was created specifically for a female Christian audience. McCarty (2018:3) argues that the character of Perpetua is presented as a "role model for courageous Christian behavior" especially in female followers of the early Christian church.

Kitzler (2007:1) argues that women were awarded honorable positions within Christianity, which in turn elevated their societal roles within the ancient world. Females were rewarded in such a way that they were able to die a heroic male death and ultimately become models for others to follow (Kitzler 2007:2). Cobb (2008:92-93) states that authors of female martyrologies presented their

martyrs with both feminine and masculine qualities. These masculine qualities which were attributed to female martyrs elevated[70] them and earned them a worthy status, while reminders of the martyr's femininity, which were idealized within Christian communities, reminded audiences of the appropriateness of the martyr's death (Cobb 2008:92-93).

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity presents Perpetua as a perfect example of this. Throughout the *passio* Perpetua is gradually defeminized and this is especially noticed through interactions with her father, who in turn is presented as an effeminate character. Cobb (2008:96) argues that in some parts of the text Perpetua's authority over men is highlighted while, in other parts of the text she is presented as an appropriate model for Christian women.[71]

2.6 Following a proto-narrative?

Sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 above set out to establish whether the *passio* narratives within the gospels were used as a "model" by early Christian authors. The similarities and narrative mirroring between the gospel *passiones* and the selected martyr narratives as assessed above provide sufficient evidence to deduce that not only were the gospel *passiones* used as a "model" but that each consequent narrative built on the one produced before it, as will be explained below. An additional table, table 12 below aims to provide a comparison between all *passiones* which have been examined within this study, in order to expand on the notions presented above on the extent to which the various *passiones* are interlinked and follow an original model, which may be called a proto-narrative.

2.6.1 Table 12: Comparison between the selected *passiones*

Item	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Stephen	Polycarp	Perpetua
1.Prayer	26:36-47	14:32-42	22:39-46	17:1-25		5:1, 7:2	3:4, 7:1, 9, 10

[70] Females, who were considered as the weaker sex in antiquity were elevated to the same level as Jesus and other notable Christian martyrs at the time, through the power and belief in Christ.
[71] See Salisbury (2004: 115-129) for an enlightening discussion on martyrdom and maternity.

2.Betrayal	26:48-49	14:44-45	22:47-48	18:2		6:1-2	
3. Arrest	26:50	14:46	22:54	18:12	6:12	7:1-3, 8:1	2:1
4. False accounts of blasphemy	26:59-61,	14:55-59	23:2, 5		6:11, 13-14		
5. Taken to the authorities	26:57-68, 27:1-2	14:53-65, 15:1-5	22:66-71, 23:1-5	18:12-14,18:28-38	6:12, 15		
6.Questioning	26:62-63, 27:11-14	14:60-61, 15:2,4	23:13-25	18:19, 33, 37-38, 19:9-10	7:1	9:2-3, 10:1-2, 11:1-2	6:3-8
7. The crowd demands the Christian's death	27:17, 20-23	15:6-14	23:18, 21, 23	18:39-40, 19:6, 15		3:2-3	18:9
8. Sentenced to death	27:26	15:15	23:24-25	19:16		12:3	6:6
9. Mocked and/ or stripped of clothing	27:27-31	15:16-20	22:63-65, 23:11	19:1-4		13:2	10:7, 20:2
10.Led to the site of death	27:31	15:20	23:26	19:17	7:58	8:3	10:4, 18:1
11. Public execution	27:32-44	15:21-32	23:26-43	19:17-30	7:58	14:1, 15:1-2	20:3
12. Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors			23:34		7:60		

13. Committing oneself to a higher power	26:42	14:36	22:42, 23:46	17:1-25	7:59	14:1-3	5:6
14. Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30	7:60	16:1	21:9
15. Stabbing				19:34		16:1	21:9

As seen in table 12 above there are many "items" of similarities which are shared between the gospel *passiones* and that of Stephen, Polycarp and Perpetua. All four figures are arrested, questioned, their deaths' are demanded by crowds of Jews and / or Pagans, they are stripped of their clothing, led to the site of their death, suffer a public execution with witnesses, commit themselves to a higher spirit and lastly, they all die at the hands of Roman authorities.

In addition to these main similarities, the following points within the *passiones* should also be noted. The accounts of Jesus, Polycarp, Perpetua and to some extent, Stephen all narrate different miraculous events before their death.[72] Within the gospel narratives, at the time of Jesus' crucifixion some sort of natural disaster seems to be taking place in Matt.27:45, 51, Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44-45. As Polycarp's body is set alight, instead of the fire engulfing and killing him, the fire instead surrounds and protects him in *MPol.*15:1-2. In the *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 20:8-9, Perpetua does not die after being tossed by the wild heifer, nor does she recall the incident. And lastly, Saul (Paul) who is present and approves of Stephen's stoning, later goes on to convert and become the biggest advocate for Christianity within the first century in Acts 7:58 and 8:1. While the forms of execution for all four figures are different, Jesus, Polycarp and Perpetua are all daggered and cry out in pain in a final death scene.

Additionally, the following differences between the accounts can also be noticed. Before his arrest Stephen does not "pray" as can be seen in the accounts of Jesus in the gospels, Polycarp and Perpetua. Both Stephen and Perpetua are not "betrayed" by a disciple as is seen the accounts of Jesus in the gospels and Polycarp. There are also no "false accounts of blasphemy" which are

[72] However, it must be noted that this was very common in martyr literature.

brought before Jesus in the account by John, as well as Polycarp and Perpetua. Furthermore, Polycarp and Perpetua are not taken to the authorities as were Jesus in the gospel accounts and Stephen. As can be seen Stephen's death was not demanded by a crowd, he was not officially sentenced to death nor was he mocked and / or stripped of his clothes. He was rather dragged out of the city walls and stoned. Furthermore, a "prayer of forgiveness" for the persecutors does not feature in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, John, Polycarp and Perpetua. And it is only in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and Stephen where a "stabbing" after the initial form of execution does not feature.

Although *imitatio Christi* is evident within each of the selected narratives Franzmann (2009:374) argues that each account builds upon and imitates the one before it. Thus, Stephen imitates the gospel narratives, Polycarp's imitates the gospels and Stephen, and Perpetua imitates Jesus, Stephen and Polycarp (Franzmann 2009:374). This is also easily noticeable in table 12 as we can see many similarities between the accounts. Furthermore, Franzmann (2009:378) argues that authors may have written their *passiones* in this way as figures who imitated Jesus and became figures of imitation themselves, as this was a common theme within the early Christian church. It must also be emphasized that by accepting their execution and standing firm in their Christian beliefs, Stephen, Polycarp and Perpetua are described as to a large extent following in the footsteps of Jesus, and practicing *imitatio Christi*.

It has been argued that through the thorough examination of martyr narratives, an assessment of the *imitatio Christi* and occurrence of narrative mirroring, it can be postulated that the gospels were used by early Christian authors as a model for creating their *passiones*. However, this study and the narratives assessed here merely provide a starting point as only 3 narratives from the early Church were taken into consideration. A larger, more varied sample size of early Christian martyr narratives should be taken into account in future studies.[73]

Additionally, the identification of the gospels as a model in the creation of later passion narratives is instrumental in an understanding of how early Christians made use of language, which in turn aided the growth and spread of the Church. The finding that early passion narratives follow a

[73] Although each account is unique in its own way, the following early martyr *passiones* could be added to such a study: Thecla from the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Justin Martyr, the Scillitan martyrs and the martyrs of Lyon and Vienne, to name a few.

"proto-narrative" affirms the idea that the original example of Jesus within the gospels had a strong persuasive power amongst early followers of the church. Thus, later authors of martyr literature, realising the persuasive power of the gospels modelled their accounts in a similar fashion. This was done in order to recreate the "persuasive power" within their narratives and ultimately to demonstrate that their martyrs lived a righteous life and followed in the footsteps of Jesus. Thus, this particular way of life is desired and should be followed. An understanding of this idea is essential for the analysis provided in chapter three.

In the analysis provided above, we can see that literature from a very early stage was used as a device influencing the behaviour of people. This is especially noticeable within early Christian literature which I believe was not only used in order to illustrate a correct way of Christian life, but was also used to reaffirm the faith in those who were already believers (paraenesis), as well as to turn others towards Christianity (protrepsis). As mentioned above, the similarities and narrative mirroring between the gospel passiones and the selected martyr narratives which were assessed provide sufficient evidence to deduce that not only were the gospel passiones used a model but that each narrative built on the one before it. In chapter three below, I explore the notions of protreptic and paraenetic within the selected martyr stories in order to understand whether the language used in these narratives which were already modelled on that of the gospels, was further utilized to reaffirm faith or persuade others to convert to Christianity.

Chapter 3: Analysis of the *passiones*: protrepsis and paraenesis

3.1 Introduction

Swancutt's (2004:113-153) fundamental chapter in the edited volume of *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, criticizes Paul Hartlich, the father of protrepsis, for his dichotomist theory surrounding the terms protrepsis and paraenesis, which has come to dominate scholarship since. Swancutt (2004:114) argues that an understanding of protrepsis and paraenesis as separate styles of speech with distinct audiences and functions, is due to a misinterpretation and rewriting of Philo of Larissa[74] by Hartlich (1889). Swancutt notes that Philo of Larissa understood protrepsis as a demonstration of good philosophy and a refutation of bad counsel from opponents.

In addition to this, other forms of instruction, such as descriptions of good and bad things, alternative ways of life, political duties, suggestive/ hortatory language and paraenetic instruction of good conduct, accompanied this understanding of protrepsis (Swancutt, 2004:115-116). However, in his seminal work which has also greatly influenced the study of paraenesis, Hartlich treated protrepsis and paraenesis as separate terms, with different audience locations and group functions, elements that have become defining features of the concepts. Thus, the similarities and overlap between protrepsis and paraenesis had been downplayed by Hartlich, providing scholarship with a flawed definition of protrepsis, in his positing of the terms in opposition with one another (Swancutt, 2004:117). Consequently, taking the lead from Hartlich, later scholars of protrepsis such as Stanley Stowers, Abraham Malherbe and David Aune[75] agree with the view that "protrepsis is essentially philosophical conversion literature" (Swancutt, 2004:117).

On the other hand, Martin Dibelius, the father of modern paraenetic studies, taking his lead from Hartlich's "false dichotomy", defines paraenesis by placing emphasis on "audience location and tradition", through an examination of works by Ps-Isocrates and Seneca (Swancutt, 2004:118). The basis of the defining features Dibelius ascribes to paraenesis as "perfect exhortations directed to a specific audience that regarded it as traditional" (Swantcutt, 2004:118), has been developed

[74] Philo of Larissa is believed to have been the last head of the Academy at Athens.
[75] Stowers (1986:113), Malherbe (1986:122) and Aune (1991:95).

by modern scholars of paraenesis[76] who now define Christian paraenesis as "traditional instructions to remind believers of the insider nature of their way" (Swancutt, 2004:118). However, this definition of paraenesis is not without its flaws. Swancutt (2004:119) argues that scholars place unnecessary emphasis of the importance of the formal elements of paraenesis. Even though protrepsis and paraenesis have been examined in a multitude of ancient sources by modern scholars, scholarship still finds itself fundamentally influenced by Hartlich's seminal work and this has led to the following two notions. On the one hand, very complex and technical definitions have been ascribed to the terms through secondary scholarship and, on the other hand, the divide has become deep-rooted in scholarship since separate areas of research have developed, with the study of paraenesis being the forte of biblical scholars, while protrepsis remains the domain of scholars of ancient philosophy, late ancient literature and patristics (Kotzé, 2011:5).

The works and theories of Hartlich and Dibelius have been used by many scholars in order to analyse whether or not a text can be identified as a protreptic, a paraenetic work or in some cases, both. However, in doing so, the terms protrepsis and paraenesis have been further distorted and set against each other. In light of this, the following sub-sections aim at firstly providing a summary of scholarship on paraenesis from the Lund (2000) and Oslo (2001) conferences[77] as found in Starr and Engberg-Pedersen (2004) and a summary of scholarship dealing with protrepsis from the recently published volume by Alieva, Kotzé and Van Der Meeren (2018).[78] Secondly, the definitions ascribed to each of the terms will then be used in order to investigate the extent to which early Christian martyr stories may have been used as protreptic and/or paraenetic tools in the early Christian church. This is done in order to establish whether the depiction of ideal examples fit for imitation in the *passio* accounts, correlates well with the aim of exhortative texts (protrepsis and paraenesis) to influence the behavior of their audiences.

[76] Scholars such as Wiard Popkes (1996:49), Abraham Malherbe (1992:280-284), Leo Perdue (1990:5), Nils Dahl (1976:11-29) and Peter Stuhlmacher (1992:373-376).

[77] A group of scholars from the Nordic countries, Germany and North America convened at a conference at Lund in 2000, and then again at Oslo in 2001, in order to discuss a broad range of issues surrounding paraenesis with the aim of providing a starting point for the clarification of this much attested ancient term (Starr and Engberg-Pedersen, 2004a:1). The contributions in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (2004), are as a direct result of these two conferences.

[78] These publications have been selected as they are made up of the most recent scholarship on the subject matter at hand.

3.2 Protrepsis

As indicated above any preliminary search of the term protrepsis may lead one to understand it as a concept used to describe literature that aims to persuade and convert outsiders towards a new way of life. This description, to me, ties in well with the original definition of the compounded Greek verb προτρέπω which was understood as "to urge on, impel, persuade" (LSJ). However, how close does the description which has been ascribed to protrepsis correspond with what authors from the ancient world understood it to be and, were there some sort of criterion used by these authors within protreptic works? The most recent publication surrounding the subject matter by Alieva et al. (2018), deals with just how "slippery, elusive and protean the concept of protrepsis" is (Alieva, 2018:20) is. The contributions made by Olga Alieva, Annemaré Kotzé and Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui towards this volume are assessed here. The contributions made by these three scholars have been selected as Alieva provides an overview of scholarship on the concept thus far. De Jáuregui assesses and identifies characteristics of protreptics within classical poetry which he believes to be the precursor of later philosophy. Kotzé, although looking at autobiography and protrepsis, identifies recurring elements within works, which could be used as pointers of protreptics.

One of the main problems that modern scholarship faces when dealing with protrepsis is that ancient authors did not ascribe their philosophical ideas within specific borders. However, the varied works within which these philosophical ideas were written, whether it be in the form of orations, dialogues, treatises or letters were essentially aimed to turn their audiences into lovers of wisdom (Alieva, 2018:19). In light of this, the concept προτρεπτικὸς λόγος was used to describe the various rhetorical feats, logical particulars and experiences which were needed to recruit new followers as well as to promote and defend the validity of new philosophies by ancient authors (Alieva, 2018:19). However, Alieva, (2018:19) argues that a problem presented itself with the need to communicate widely varying content in different modes of expression to its wide-ranging target audiences which might include the Greek aristocracy, Hellenistic classrooms or, much later, followers of the early Christian church.

In Alieva's analysis of the "protean" concept of protrepsis she notes that although the term "protreptic" can be applied to texts and that there are references to protreptic in antiquity, it is

essentially a modern concept which was canonized in the 19th century, when attempts were made to classify a "protreptic genre" (2018:29). The discovery of traces of Aristotle's lost *Protrepticus* in Iamblichus by Bywater (1869) can be credited as the origins of modern studies surrounding protrepsis, as this detection initiated discussion about the origins and literary form of the work (Alieva, 2018:29). However, Alieva (2018:32) notes that later scholars began questioning this new literary form called "protreptic" and rather referred to "literary patterns" pointing out how difficult it was to arrive at a definition.

With the move to recognize "literary patterns" within protreptic works, Alieva argues that the relation between texts, historical, institutional and literary contexts were neglected by scholars and in essence, definitions of protrepsis based on "motifs" were becoming too broad to be useful (2018:32-34). Kotzé (2018:365), in agreement with Alieva (2018:33), maintains that there is much difficulty in trying to formulate a working definition of protrepsis since it can be located within various literary forms (anthologies, dialogues, orations, treatises, letters) from the ancient world. In addition to this, working towards a definition of protrepsis ultimately implies universality, which is somewhat unattainable, as an umbrella description cannot be projected onto texts which were produced in such widely differing historical situations and periods (Alieva, 2018:35). In similar vein, Kotzé (2018:365) and de Jáuregui (2018:50) explain that the word protreptic has a long history in scholarship of being used loosely and in reference to any aspects alluding to exhortation.

De Jáuregui (2018:51) argues further that in order to identify useful and specific elements which encompass protrepsis, it is essential to distinguish it from other types of discourses such as paraenesis (this being the most important) or didactic, as these discourses overlap many respects. In agreement with Kotzé (2018:366), de Jáuregui stresses that one should look to the basic elements of the "communicative process" within a selected work as a criterion for describing a work as protreptic. These elements include: a speaker / speakers, the addressee, temporal and spatial concepts, as well as a specific set of emotions which the author aims to instill (de Jáuregui 2018:51). In addition to these elements Kotzé (2018:366-367) includes elements like the following as indicative of the presence of protrepsis: direct exhortation to the addressee, positive expositions of the benefits of a new way of life or the condemnation of one's current way of life and in some instances an example of a life changing conversion. Elaborating on the identification of

communicative aims within works as criterion for protrepsis, Kotzé explains that ancient authors may have regarded these aims as characteristic features within various types of exhortative literary works (2018:366).

As a result of the broadened description of protrepsis, the corpus of protreptic texts have grown substantially. While this broad corpus of texts may pose a problem for some scholars, Alieva argues that this is a positive sign as modern scholars have become increasingly aware that ancient philosophical texts should not be examined as if they were contemporary discourses (2018:35). In any attempt to understand protrepsis in the modern world scholars need to take into consideration that protrepsis can occur in various literary forms or contexts and be directed at different kinds of audiences. Thus Alieva argues that we should rather concentrate on contextualized meanings of protrepsis (2018:45). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis protrepsis is understood here as a form of literature with the aim of turning its audiences towards something new, often an all-encompassing new way of life.

This means that here protrepsis will be understood in terms of its original Greek definition as turning an audience towards something specific, whether it may be philosophy, a lifestyle or religion. Closely linked to this description of protrepsis, is the identification of the communicative aims of the author toward the audience, as pointed out by de Jáuregui and Kotzé.

3.3 Paraenesis

The word paraenesis comes from the Greek compound verb παραινέω with a meaning related to "to exhort, recommend, advise" (LSJ), thus having clear benevolent connotations in the ancient world. However, this seemingly simple concept has become complex and problematized within secondary scholarship. A publication resulting from the Lund and Oslo conferences (2000 and 2001 respectively) titled *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* will be examined here with the aim of moving a step closer in understanding the term "paraenesis". Contributions made by Wiard Popkes, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and James Starr towards the edited volume are assessed here. Popkes (2004) notes on how New Testament scholars understand paraenesis. Engberg-Pedersen (2004) expresses his dissatisfaction at how broad and encompassing the term has become due to

New Testament studies. And lastly, Starr (2004) makes mention of specific characteristics which can be found in paraenetic works. The contributions by these scholars are the most helpful and informative in assessing whether martyr literature could be considered as paraenetic works.

In an attempt to formulate a focused definition and understanding of paraenesis a group of scholars who assembled at the Oslo conference in 2001, formulated a greatly helpful description of paraenesis, which reflects on its typical literary features and examines the ways in which these texts functioned in their Hellenistic social settings (Starr, 2004:78). Accordingly, the definition of paraenesis from the Oslo conference is: "Paraenesis is (a) concise, benevolent injunction that reminds of moral practices to be pursued or avoided, expresses or implies a shared worldview, and does not anticipate disagreement" (Starr, 2004:79). Using this description Starr (2004) subsequently formulates five prominent elements which can be used to recognise paraenesis within a given text. Importantly, Starr argues that ideally all five elements would be present within a text. However, the absence of some of the elements does not necessarily disqualify a text from being categorized as having paraenetic features (Starr, 2004:81).

Starr (2004:79) notes that the first element deals with "benevolence". This occurs when a narrative clearly displays a positive attitude towards the audience and may be regarded as representing communication between amicable parties, where a desire for the wellbeing of a party addressed in the work is unequivocally expressed by the other (Starr, 2004:79). The second element deals with "moral practices". Starr (2004:79) argues that a narrative should addresses moral practices which should be pursued or avoided, as well as human behaviour and conduct. The third element serves to "remind". Thus, narratives would aim at reminding the audience of moral practices which have been previously acquired (Starr, 2004:79). The fourth element concerns the notion of a "shared worldview". In such instances the narrative would presuppose or explicitly express a shared worldview which informs and motivates the given advice (Starr, 2004:80). Lastly, the fifth element deals with "not anticipating disagreement". Starr (2004:80) points out that the sharing of a worldview simultaneously presupposes that the narrative does not anticipate disagreement from the audience with positions it argues for. Thus the offered advice moves toward a way in achieving common goals.

Thus, from the definition arrived at by the Oslo conference, we may summarize that paraenesis constitutes a type of hortatory communication rather than being characterized by the social and formal characteristics, which are typical of genres and literary forms (Starr, 2004:81).

Popkes (2004:41), on the other hand, expresses disagreement with the Oslo definition on the basis that it takes only a limited area of New Testament material into consideration. In addition to this, he states that attempting a scholarly description for a term such as paraenesis will always have its downfalls because of the difficulties of achieving a balance between time and setting (Popkes, 2004:41). Elaborating on this Popkes (2004) notes that in order to move forward with a definition of paraenesis, scholars must consider the historical timeline within which research was produced. Popkes (2004:14) states that prior to the twentieth century paraenesis was used as a loose, undefined term. However, from then onwards specific formulae were used when considering paraenesis. Of these, three basic approaches may be identified. The first deals with paraenesis as a genre and defines particular texts as being paraenetic (Popkes, 2004:14). Scholars adhering to this definition view paraenesis as made up of a sequence of disconnected exhortations directed towards a unified group of addressees. However, Popkes (2004:14) argues strongly that this view cannot be upheld and that we should rather assess whether a text has paraenetic purposes and not whether the text itself may as a whole be categorized as belonging to a paraenetic genre.[79]

The second approach Popkes highlights focuses on the semantic reach of the term paraenesis, by taking its departure from Greek semantics. This line argues that any modern usage of the term paraenesis should not deviate from the possible ancient meanings of the word and that in order to ascertain the original meaning, we should look to its Greek verb root αἰνέω which has the positive connotations of "to praise, to recommend, to approve and to advise" (Popkes, 2004:16). The third approach Popkes discusses assesses the situations in which paraenesis was used in the ancient world. Popkes (2004:14-15) points out that paraenesis seems to have been used in cases of "urgent decisions" and goes on to give an example of advice given within a war situation in order to motivate soldiers towards achieving success. In this way, the situational approach is linked to the semantic approach since there were many instances in which paraenesis might be necessary (Popkes, 2004:17). However, during the Hellenistic period it is believed that lexicologists added to this situational and semantical approach by regarding paraenesis as something that does not

[79] See Popkes (2004:14-16) for full argument.

"expect resistance due to its unquestionable good quality" (Popkes, 2004:17). Popkes (2004:18) argues that it is in the domain of such semantic and situational aspects that New Testament scholars locate early Christian paraenesis. In addition to this, Popkes argues for the following definition of paraenesis in the field of New Testament studies: "Paraenesis is clear, concrete, benevolent guidance that reminds of practices to be pursued or avoided in the Christian way of life, expresses a shared, articulated world view, and does not anticipate disagreement" (Popkes, 2004:43).

Disapproving of such a broad, all-encompassing understanding of paraenesis, Engberg-Pedersen (2004) expresses his dissatisfaction with the way in which the term paraenesis has been used and understood within the discipline of New Testament studies. His dissatisfaction stems from his efforts to analyze the New Testament and Pauline literature in particular. Engberg-Pedersen (2004:46) argues that it is from these areas of study that the modern use of the term has spread to other fields of study. Arguing that the term paraenesis has become too broad because of how it is used in New Testament studies, Engberg-Pedersen suggests that we need to look back to the history and roots of the modern term paraenesis in an attempt to move away from the idea of paraenesis as a concept that has come to be understood as any type of "exhortation" (2004:49).

In an attempt to do this, Engberg-Pedersen suggests that we should look to the writings of Isocrates[80] and Ps-Isocrates[81], as three fundamental points may be taken from these works (2004:49). Firstly, the activity of paraenesis is understood to have belonged to a tradition that can be traced back to archaic poets such as Hesiod, Theognis and Phocylides (Engberg-Pedersen, 2004:49). Secondly, *To Demonicus* should not be taken as an ideal example of paraenesis as a literary genre. We should instead view the writings of Isocrates as "giving expression to an awareness of a specific activity or practice, which is paraenesis" (Engberg-Pedersen, 2004:50). Thirdly, Engberg-Pedersen argues that this "specific activity or practice" would have encompassed the following 3 basic features: a) the acts of exhorting, urging and advising should be clearly distinguished from one another; b) there should be a sense of "enjoinment";[82] and c) traditional

[80] *To Nicocles*, *Nicocles* and *Antidosis.*
[81] *To Demonicus.*
[82] The meaning of enjoinment here relies on the important distinction between "exhortation, urging and advising" and the definitions ascribed to their original Greek forms. See Engberg-Pedersen (2004:50-52) for full discussion on this.

advice or popular ethics that originated within the thoughts of archaic poets should feature (Engberg-Pedersen, 2004:50-52).

In this way Engberg-Pedersen, in agreement with Popkes (2004), argues that paraenesis was not a type of literary genre. In light of this, paraenesis should be regarded as the activity of giving injunctions in a particular way that reflects a "traditional system of popular ethics" which had developed over centuries (Engberg-Pedersen, 2004:53). Engberg-Pedersen (2004:53) argues that understanding paraenesis in this way is beneficial since a restriction in the term will result in a neat corpus of texts for analysis and will inevitably minimize much confusion within the subject area.

Starr, also elaborating on the all-encompassing description that has come to dominate scholarship, states that paraenesis has become an increasingly multivalent term due to the merging of two definitions of the word (2004:77). The first definition of paraenesis is based on the original Greek meaning of "advice", while the second looks to Martin Dibelius' form critical approach of defining paraenesis as a "specific literary form" and as such as "an ancient literary genre" (Starr, 2004:77-78). Starr, in agreement with Engberg-Pedersen (2004), notes that this has led to the current predicament scholars find themselves in, where the traditional meaning of paraenesis has been stretched out in order to allow the term to accommodate multiple types of hortatory texts (2004:78). In this way, the term paraenesis might be used to denote a literary form, communication that reinforces ethically correct behaviours, or something which addresses the cosmology or theology informing the ethic (Starr, 2004:78).

A redefinition of paraenesis has not been attempted in this thesis due to the fact that I believe that trying to provide a description for a term which spans across various chronological periods as well as over different ancient and modern disciplines, is too daunting a task to undertake here. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, paraenesis will be understood in terms of the characteristics ascribed to it at the Oslo conference. This description provides a matrix of easily unidentifiable elements which may be used to identify paraenesis in a text. No matter how broad and encompassing this description may be, I have come to the conclusion that an analysis of early martyr stories using this criterion may be fruitful.

Even though Kotzé (2018:367) concedes that the notion of biblical scholars who regard protrepsis and paraenesis as having a dichotomist relationship has become ingrained in scholarly discourse, she argues that the terms are "two distinct but closely related types of exhortation" which often

occur in conjunction with one another within selected texts. Her understanding that both protrepsis (conversion-of-outsiders) and paraenesis (confirmation-of-insiders) could be present in the same texts together because of the mixed audiences at whom these were aimed and the close relationship between the terms, confirms my findings in the analyses of the narratives discussed in this thesis. The selection of martyr stories is examined in sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 below for instances of protrepsis and paraenesis in order to assess whether early martyr literature was used as a protreptic and/ or paraenetic tool in the early Christian church.

3.4 Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles (6 and 7)

As mentioned in section 2.3 above, Stephen, the Hellenistic deacon, was stoned on false charges of blasphemy by the Jewish community. While the account of his martyrdom represents but a small part in the New Testament, he is widely considered to be the proto-martyr of the early Christian church, thus making his story of great importance to this study. Even though the Acts of the Apostles might fruitfully be assessed as a whole for displaying elements of protrepsis and paraenesis, my main focus here is on the narrative of the martyrdom of the figure of Stephen. Thus Acts 6 and 7 are singled out here and analysed in this section for possible occurrences of protreptic and/ or paraenetic elements.

3.4.1 Protrepsis in Acts 6 and 7

At first glance Acts 6 and 7 read as a simple martyr story. However, a closer analysis of the narrative shows that there are many other dimensions to this story. Throughout the narrative, we notice that the author continually represents Stephen as a righteous figure in the account by describing him as: “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), “full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8), “wisdom and spirit with which he spoke” (Acts 6:10) and as “being filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:55). Stephen here is contrasted to the Israelites, who are represented as being unrighteous as they “stood up and argued with Stephen” (Acts 6:9); “they secretly instigated some men to say, “we have heard him speak

blasphemous words…" (Acts 6:11); "they stirred up the people, elders and scribes…" (Acts 6:12); "they set up false witnesses…" (Acts 6:13) and in Acts 7:54 and 58 the Jews are described as "they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen" and "they dragged him out of the city". Matthews (2010:4) claims that although the crowd became enraged by Stephen's accusations in which they are implicated as being prophet persecutors and breaking the law, the choice of stoning Stephen, which was considered a crime of the "barbarous" represents Jewish people as such in the account.

The representation of the positive story of the life of Stephen, which is in contrast to the unjust ways associated with the Jews in the narrative, is further elaborated on by Stephen within his speech to the Sanhedrin council, to show the Israelites that they need to change their religious ideologies. Stephen says to the council "you stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit just as your ancestors used to do. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? … you have become his betrayers and murderers… you are the ones who have received the law… and yet you have not kept it" in Acts 7:51-53. In addition to this, Hamon (1977:293) argues that instead of Stephen providing the Sanhedrin council with a speech in defense of his actions, his outline of the history of Israel and the claims of the Jews and their inconsistent worship of God was designed to "lead those who thought it through to the truth". It is clear that such an interpretation points in the direction of associating protreptic purpose with this narrative.

With Stephen's speech to the council tracing the long and tumultuous history of the Israelites from the time of Abraham right until the time of Moses in Acts 7:1-53. He tells the Israelites that they "are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do" (Acts 7:51) and questions "which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute?" in Acts 7:52. It can be argued that throughout Stephen's speech, although there is no direct exhortation to the Israelites to change their views, a subtle exhortation is implied through his rhetorical questions in Acts 7:51-53.

However, do these factors mean that the story of Stephen's martyrdom from Acts 6 and 7 can be considered as displaying protreptic characteristics? From the communicative aims outlined above on the basis of the work by de Jáuregui and Kotzé, we can see that the text features a speaker (Stephen) and an addressee (the Sanhedrin council); it portrays Stephen and his ideology in a positive light in comparison to that of the Israelites and there is also what I believe to be a subtle

exhortation within Stephen's speech. In addition to this, Matthews (2010:19) makes special note of the name of the first Christian martyr as being "Stephanos" which means "crown". Matthews (2010:19) states that it may be purely coincidental that the first martyr's name represents the reward for those Christians whose testimony in belief of Christ results in their death. However, it may be argued that this could have been used as an additional tool by the author to encourage individuals from the early Christian community to persevere in the difficulties of their chosen way of life.

However, what is most intriguing about Stephen's stoning, is the presence of Saul (Paul): "and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul" (Acts 7:58). Saul here does not play a prominent role in the narrative and it is only in Acts 9:3-6 where we learn that Saul was visited by the Spirit of Christ on the road to Damascus and was subsequently converted and baptized in Acts 9:17-22. Could it be possible that his presence at the stoning of Stephen acted as some sort of precursor to his acceptance of Christ and his later distinguished role in the early Church?[83] Could the example of Stephen have had a (preliminary) protreptic effect on this young man?

From the discussion above and the assessment of the communicative aims within Acts 6 and 7, I believe that the account, especially Stephen's speech, may have been used by the early Church to show Israelites that they were on the wrong path and that following Christ would set them on a righteous path. This is consistent with the aims ascribed to protreptic texts.

3.4.2 Paraenesis in Acts 6 and 7

An in-depth analysis of Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin council leads me to believe that the speech encompasses three out of the five elements which may be used to recognize paraenesis within the text. Firstly, we can address the element of moral practices. Towards the end of his speech to the council, we read that Stephen questions the moral practices of the Israelites by accusing them of "forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do" (Acts 7:51).

[83] The scope of the study does not allow for the thesis to delve further into this question. However, this could be used as a starting point for further studies dealing with Saul's conversion and prominent role within the early Church.

Moreover, he then goes on to pose the question, "which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers" in Acts 7:52.

Secondly, in the speech, also the element of reminding the audience of moral practices which they had previously acquired is present. When Stephen begins his speech, he traces the long history of the Israelites and their God from a number of Old Testament passages "the God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham…" (Acts 7:2); "leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you" (Acts 7:3); "time grew near for the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to Abraham" (Acts 7:17); "our ancestors were unwilling to obey him; instead they pushed him aside" (Acts 7:39). These references may be regarded as an instance of reminding the Israelites of the plight, hardships and promises which were made by God to their ancestors.

In this way, Stephen reminds the Sanhedrin council about previous convictions which they have learnt about. Jackson (1930:283) believes that although Stephen's defense speech was to convince the Sanhedrin council of Israel's disobedience regarding the laws, Stephen was nonetheless addressing a group consisting of individuals who would have been knowledgeable about the scriptures. Thus, there would have been no need to remind them of the scriptures as such. Additionally, Jackson (1930:284) argues that within Stephen's speech, he was trying to prove that he had not blasphemed the temple or the law. Therefore, one may argue that Stephen's speech may also have served the purpose of reminding the Sanhedrin council about their previous teachings, which is an integral element of paraenesis, as it is aimed at insiders.

However, in this case, it does not reaffirm their belief in this previous theology, but rather this reminder vexes the Sanhedrin council. Thirdly, I argue that this questioning of their moral practices and reminder of previous convictions were not supposed to be met with disagreement. However, these elements within the speech only served to further vex the council, resulting in Stephen being stoned. However, Matthews (2010:19) argues that Stephen's prayer of forgiveness to his persecutors further serves to illustrate the martyr's "superior ethics".

The analysis of Acts 6 and 7 above, illustrates that a paraenetic purpose may be ascribed to the narrative on the basis that we have an insider speaking to the Jews in order to illustrate the error of their understanding of scripture and to accept Christ, an issue which had, as a matter of fact, been prophesied in their own earlier scriptures.

It appears from the discussion above that it is not always easy to distinguish protreptic from paraenetic purpose in specific texts. Yet, there is a strong possibility that the story of Stephen's martyrdom may have played a role akin to that of other texts identified as pursuing either protreptic or paraenetic purposes.

3.5 Polycarp of Smyrna in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*

As was illustrated in section 2.4 above, Polycarp the famed bishop of Smyrna was burned at the stake for teaching and proclaiming the gospel to the local community and refusing to renounce Christ. It has been deduced through careful examination that the passion narratives within the gospels have been used as a blueprint in the composition of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Within the gospels, Jesus continually exhorts his disciples and literally urges them to "take up the cross" in Matt.10:38, 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23 and 14:27. However, have these elements also been carried through into *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*? The narrative is one of the earliest martyr accounts outside the New Testament. Thus, it is important to this study as it represents an important link in the chain of narratives, each showing awareness of preceding narratives. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* is analysed here in order to establish if it contains features that may make it suited to fulfilling a protreptic and/or paraenetic purpose in the early Christian church.

3.5.1 Protrepsis in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*

The analysis of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* in terms of exhortation, in the sense of turning someone towards something, and the communicative aims of the author has proven to be difficult. There are no explicit instances where the author directly exhorts the audience to take up Christianity and turn away from paganism.[84] However, this is not to say that the text does not try

[84] Interesting enough, the author does narrate exhortation on behalf of the Roman authorities towards the Christians in an attempt to make them recant (*MPol*. 8:2, 9:1-3, 10:1). However, it must be remembered that this was normal procedure when it came to putting a Christian on trial before they were martyred. The governor would always try to convince the accused Christian to recant and blaspheme against the name of Christ.

to influence the choices of the audience in another way. I would like to argue that exhortation is done much more subtly and in an indirect sense.

In saying this, it can be noted that the author's presentation of chaos (paganism) vs. order (Christianity) throughout the entire text may be understood in the following two ways. The first, I believe is to reaffirm to those who are already Christians that they have chosen the right path, and secondly, in some way, to illustrate to pagans (who might in some way have access to the contents the account) that they represent chaos and unjustness in the known world. Along the same lines Thompson (2002: 27) argues that the author of the narrative has represented Christians as the "underdogs" while Rome and the emperors are represented as "mad and sadistic", especially since Polycarp's death took place in the amphitheater during the Roman games. This polarized representation does resonate with what scholars like Kotzé (2018:369) have referred to as the presence of the two streams in protreptic texts. The possibility has to be considered that in representing this cosmic conflict through differing religious ideologies, the author may have been trying to turn pagans away from an unjust lifestyle, to one that is just and righteous.

This polarized presentation is present in many different instances throughout the text. I make mention here only of some of the most explicit juxtapositions made by the author. In *MPol.* 9:2, Polycarp is described in the following words: "[he] with a sober countenance, looked at the mob of lawless pagans who were in the arena". *MPol.* 11:1-2 sees Polycarp telling the governor that he is not afraid of being burnt at the stake since the fire of everlasting punishment and judgement that awaits the impious is much worse: "the fire you threaten me with burns merely for a time…you are ignorant of the everlasting punishment and of the judgement that is to come, which awaits the impious". Again in *MPol*. 12:2, the pagans are described as a mob who are shouting in uncontrollable anger: "the entire mob of pagans and Jews from Smyrna shouted out aloud in uncontrollable rage". And after Polycarp has died, the author goes on to describe in *MPol.* 17:1-2 that Niketas, possessed by the "Evil One", made sure that the Christians were not able to collect Polycarp's body: "the jealous and envious Evil One, who is the adversary of the race of the just…prevented us even from taking up the poor body… he got Niketas, Herod's father and Alce's brother, to petition the governor not to give up his body".

In addition to this, the author makes explicit mention of Polycarp's good behaviour compared to the bloodthirsty pagans and Jews. This is illustrated in *MPol.* 1:1 "Polycarp who put a stop to the

persecution by his own martyrdom…", *MPol.* 3:2 "away with these atheists! Go and get Polycarp", 6:1 "the pursuivants persisted on his trail", *MPol*. 6:2 "Herod was eager to bring him to the amphitheatre", 8:3 "and spoke threateningly to him…", *MPol.* 12:2 "… the entire mob of pagans and Jews from Smyrna shouted aloud in uncontrollable rage". Here again, the author pegs the righteous Christians against the unjust pagans and Jews.

Additionally, with the juxtaposition between just and unjust lifestyles Cobb (2008:65) argues that the author of the narrative represented Christians as being masculine and having control of their emotions while Pagans and Jews lacked masculinity and displayed their emotions. The Christian self-control is particularly emphasized in *MPol*. 2:2: "for even when they were torn by whips until the very structure of their bodies was laid bare down to the inner veins and arteries, they endured it, making even the bystanders weep for pity".

The author, in fact, repeatedly highlights their single-minded resolve, for example in *MPol*. 3:1: "but with a show of force [he] dragged the beast on top of him, intending to be freed all the more quickly from this unjust and lawless life". In *MPol.* 11:1 the author says that Polycarp replied the following to the governor: "repentance from a better state to one that is worse is impossible for us", emphasizing that the convicted Christians (Germanicus and Polycarp, respectively) would rather become martyrs than renounce Christ and live an unjust life.

Further, the ways in which Christians were tortured are explicitly and repeatedly described in the text, for example in *MPol*.2:3: "being laid out upon trumpet-shells, and bruised by other different kinds of tortures". This had the dual function of evoking particular emotions in the audience, but also of illustrating to them that with a belief in Christ, you can endure much.

I further argue that the text is well designed to elicit also a different set of emotions from those of the audience. The first would be sorrow at the arrest and death of Polycarp, especially due to his old age. The second would be emotions which invoke happiness, joy and trust as the Christians who would have heard this account would have been joyful in knowing that they are living a just and righteous life, and that, just as for the martyrs, Christ will be there for them in their hour of need. And lastly, contempt towards pagans and Jews, not only for persecuting their religion, but also for the unjust life they are living. Hartog (2015:442), for example, points out that the representation of the Jews within the text is so negative and places them in such an "unfavourbale light" that it questions historical plausibility.

While all the above features of the text may have had an indirect exhortative effect, it can be noted that there are also three instances of direct exhortation: in *MPol*. 1:1-2 "for practically everything that had gone before took place that the Lord might show us from heaven a witness in accordance with the gospels…that we might become his imitators"; in *MPol*. 17:3 "we love the martyrs and as the disciples and imitators of the Lord…May we too share with them as fellow disciples"; and in *MPol*. 19:1 the author says: "he alone is especially remembered by everyone and is everywhere mentioned…whose testimony, following the gospel of Christ, everyone desires to imitate". In these lines the author narrates that Polycarp's martyrdom was worthy of imitation and thus other Christians desired to become his imitators.[85]

Consequently, I believe that although there is no direct exhortation to the audience urging them to turn towards Christ or to become Christian martyrs, the author by constantly pitting Christianity against paganism tries to illustrate to the audience the superiority of the Christian way of life so that they should turn toward Christianity in order to live righteously and be saved by Christ. While this type of exhortation may presumably also have had an effect on any non-Christians who had witnessed the unbelievable deeds of the martyrs and become familiar with the texts (i.e. a protreptic function) it is also well designed to encourage insiders and in the following section I say more about the possible paraenetic purpose of the texts.

3.5.2 Paraenesis in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*

A reading of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* with an understanding of paraenesis in mind, allows one to notice paraenetic elements within the text. Although the letter provides a description of the gruesome death of Polycarp, it can be argued that the attitude of the author towards his audience is of a triumphant nature. In spite of the somber notes of a narrative that does not shy away from the details in describing the deaths of Germanicus ("he fought manfully with the beasts…but he with a show of force dragged the beast on top of him" in *MPol*. 3:1) and Polycarp ("the men in charge of the fire started to light it" in *MPol*.15:1 and "these vicious men realized that his body

[85] As examined in chapter 2.4 above, Polycarp's martyrdom was according to the gospels and that this martyrdom should be one that is imitated by fellow Christians. This could possibly speak to the occurrence of future martyr stories following a similar pattern of martyrdom as did Jesus and by default, Polycarp, since his martyrdom was most desired.

could not be consumed by the fire they ordered a confector to go up and plunge a dagger into the body" in *MPol*.16:1) the tone is often closer to triumphant. The deaths are celebrated and represented as something positive and desirable throughout the text as can be seen in *MPol*. 2:1-2: "blessed indeed and noble are all the martyrdoms that took place…who indeed would not admire the martyr's nobility, their courage and love for their Master? For even when they were torn by whips until the very structure of their bodies was laid bare…they endured it"; in *MPol.* 17:3: "we love the martyrs as the disciples and imitators of the Lord"; in *MPol*. 19:1: "the blessed Polycarp…he alone is remembered by everyone and is everywhere mentioned"; and in *MPol*. 22:1 "may it be granted to us to come into the kingdom of Jesus Christ following his footsteps". The triumphant nature of the text is also to be observed in the fact that it is addressed to the church at Philomelium from the church at Smyrna and may be understood as a communication between two amicable parties concerning their common belief in Jesus Christ.

Another characteristic consistently associated with paraenesis in scholarship is that it reminds the audience of moral practices. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* is filled with many reminders of moral practices that should be pursued or avoided by Christians. These are illustrated in *MPol*. 1:2: "…to desire not only one's own salvation but also that of all the brothers"; *MPol*. 4: "…we do not approve of those who come forward of themselves: this is not the teaching of the gospel"; *MPol.* 11:1: "but it is good to change from what is wicked to righteousness"; and *MPol*. 17:2: "… we could never abandon Christ, for it was he who suffered for the redemption of those who are saved in the entire world… nor could we worship anyone else". It is clear that a shared belief about these moral practices underpins the communication as well as affirms the belief insiders.

The illustration of good moral practices and human behaviours which the author achieves through his descriptions of Polycarp, may have served to remind the audience of teachings that were previously acquired, thus strengthening their resolve during a time of difficulty in persecution. This is best illustrated in Polycarp's prayer before his death (*MPol*. 14:1-3) which directly speaks to the shared worldview between the congregants at the Church of Smyrna and Philomelium "O Lord, omnipotent God and Father of your beloved and blessed child Christ Jesus, through whom we have received our knowledge of you, the God of the angels, the powers, and of all creation…" (*MPol*. 14:1).

It is my view that the shared worldview, together with the triumphant tone of the text, is further illustrated with the use of the first-person plurals and references to the audience as brothers throughout the work: "this is the reason, brothers, that we do not approve of those who come forward of themselves" (*MPol*. 4:1), "those of us to whom it was given to see beheld a miracle … we have been preserved to recount the story to others (*MPol*. 15:1), "…prevented us from taking up the poor body…little did they know that we could never abandon Christ … nor could we worship anyone else … we love the martyrs … may we too share with them as fellow disciples!" (*MPol*. 17:1-3). These are but some examples of this. Along the same lines as argued above, Hartog (2015:439) who has also made note of the use of the first person within the narrative, believes that this illustrates the "communal nature of the work".

Lastly, the text does not anticipate disagreement by the congregation at Philomelium (or any other early congregation that it may have spread to). The author at every opportunity does not fail to reaffirm that following the habits of Paganism and Judaism represents an unjust life in comparison to the righteous path of Christianity. Also Hartog's (2015:446) remarks that the narrative provided "encouragement" to the early Christian community as Polycarp remained "faithful and firm" in the face of the proconsul continually offering him the opportunity to save himself, point to a paraenetic purpose. As indicated in section 3.5.1 above, affirming belief in those already part of a religious group and encouraging them to persevere, are typical elements of paraenetic work.

Therefore, I would like to put forward the idea that *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* certainly embodies features of paraenetic. It may well have been used by the early Christian church at Smyrna and amongst various Christian congregations with the aim of encouraging and strengthening the resolve of communities who were beginning to be sought out and persecuted by Roman authorities.

3.6 Vibia Perpetua in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*

The examination of *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* in section 2.5 above, provides an analysis of Perpetua's passion account (3-10) and a comparison to the gospels. However, in this section the analysis is focused on the text as a whole and not just selected parts. As in the texts examined

above, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* is analyzed with the aim of ascertaining whether protreptic and/or paraenetic characteristics are also present in this narrative.

3.6.1 Protrepsis in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*

As is explored and will emerge below *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* does not only present itself as a protreptic, but I also argue that it was written specifically with women in mind in order to encourage and empower them. Having been compiled from the contributions of three different authors *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* may very possibly illustrate three different communicative aims by the three authors. Thus a very careful examination of the text in reference to any protreptic functions is required.

The text, taken in its entirety has three very clear speakers, namely the unknown editor, Perpetua and Saturus. In spite of this it is safe to say that the work as a whole has followers of the early Christian church as its main target audience. I argue that the text aimed at eliciting two emotions within its audience. The first was sympathy, especially on the part of the female Christians and new mothers. The second, as in the case of the works discussed above, was joyfulness and a feeling of being safe in Christ. These emotions have been illustrated within the text as follows. From the beginning of Perpetua's account, the reader is made aware of her own emotional reactions to the situation. Her fears and dismay are described in words designed to elicit a reaction from the audience. So we have for example: "a few days later we were lodged in the prison; and I was terrified, as I had never before been in such a dark hole" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 3.5); "what a difficult time it was!" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 3:5), or "I was tortured with worry for my baby there" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 3:5).

Additionally, her father's visits brought her great distress. She says, for example: "and he left me in great sorrow", "I felt sorry for his pathetic old age" and "I felt sorry for his unhappy old age" (in *Passio Perp. et Feli*. 5:6, 6:5 and 9:3, respectively). The appeal to the sympathy of the audience is further intensified when we learn that both women who have newly become mothers have been condemned to the beasts: "then Hilarianus passed sentence on all of us: we were condemned to the beasts" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 6:6). In addition to this, we learn that Felicity was further distressed

due to a law forbidding the execution of pregnant women: "as the day of the spectacle drew near she was very distressed that her martyrdom would be postponed because of her pregnancy; for it is against the law for women with child to be executed" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*.15:2).

On the other hand, in contrast to the devices eliciting the audience's emotions of sympathy, the reader is presented with instances where the martyrs are portrayed as being joyful and where it is emphasized how their trust in Christ was being strengthened through every hardship. I quote a few examples: "I was inspired by the Spirit not to ask for any other favour after the water but simply the perseverance of the flesh" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 3:5); "my prison had suddenly become a palace" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 3:9); "but as god willed, the baby had no further desire for the breast, nor did I suffer any inflammation; and so I was relieved of my anxiety" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 6:8); and "they marched from the prison to the amphitheatre joyfully" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 18:1). It can be argued that the juxtaposition of these two different registers of emotions may be designed to illustrate to the audience, that through Christianity, there is always hope; no hardship can take away the joys of the faith.

In addition to these emotions that the authors (the editor and Perpetua in the examples above) may have aimed to elicit within the reader, there are two occurrences of direct exhortation which feature in the text. In the introductory paragraph (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 1-2), the reader is already met with one such instance as the editor writes: "...those that now learn of it through hearing may have fellowship with the holy martyrs and, through them, with the Lord Christ Jesus…" (1:6). And towards the end of the text, after Saturus has been wounded by the leopard, the reader is made aware of his last words to the soldier Pudens: "Good-bye. Remember me, and remember the faith. These things should not disturb you but rather strengthen you" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 21:3).

As is noticed in section 3.5.2 above, in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity,* pagans are illustrated as being unjust in comparison to the Christians. In contrast to being reminded about the greatness that comes with Christianity and suffering for it, Shaw (1993:4) points out that the readers of the narrative are also constantly reminded about the harshness of the Roman authorities towards the early Christians. Apart from Perpetua and her companions being arrested for being Christians, their deaths were specially reserved in order to provide entertainment on the birthday of anniversary of Caesar Geta. This degradation imposed on the Christians by the Roman state is manifest in statements like the following: "they were then led up to the gates and the men were

forced to put on robes of the priests of Saturn, the women the dress of the priestesses of Ceres" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 18:4). Shaw (1993:5) argues that by forcing the Christians to wear the robes of religious cults of North Africa, the local authorities "tried to add shame to their suffering". Furthermore, Shaw (1993:7) maintains that the authorities were deliberate in choosing a wild and savage cow as the animal to fulfil Perpetua and Felicitas' sentence, as this was meant to mock the sex of the condemned women.

As was also noticed with *The Martyrdom of Polycarp,* persuasion and exhortation feature as an activity of the Roman authorities and aimed at the convicted Christians. In this case, the persuasion is being done by Perpetua's pagan father a total of three times: "my father out of love for me was trying to persuade me and shake my resolution"; "my father also arrived from the city, worn with worry, and he came to see me with the idea of persuading me"; "then, when it came my turn, my father appeared with my son, dragged me from the step, and said: 'Perform the sacrifice – have pity on your baby!'" (in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 3:1, 5:1-4 and 6:2 respectively). As was habitual at these occasions also the proconsul tries to persuade Perpetua: "Hilarianus the governor…, said to me: 'Have pity on your father's grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors.'" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 6:3). As Lefkowitz (1976:418) also argues, Perpetua's withdrawal from her family life and especially the resistance towards her father demonstrated here represents the "standard behavior pattern of conversion".

Another interesting aspect of exhortation within the text deals with baptism and conversion stories, the latter pointed out by Kotzé (2018:371) as a frequent feature of protreptic texts. In *Passio Perp. et Feli*. 3:5, we read that after Perpetua was arrested and imprisoned, she was baptized ("during these few days I was baptized"). At a later point in the text, the reader learns through the words of the editor that "by this time the adjutant who was head of the jail was himself a Christian" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 16:4) implying that he may also have recently converted to Christianity. And in the last occurrence of conversion within the text, the reader learns that during the "love feast" which occurred during the night before the Christians were to be devoured by beasts, a group of pagans who had gathered in order to ridicule them "… would depart from the prison in amazement, and many of them began to believe" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 17:3). This took place after Saturus spoke to them about God's judgement and the joy they would receive from the suffering awaiting them, a motif recurring in all the text analysed here.

I believe that *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* does not only present itself as a protreptic through the use of having a direct speaker and audience, eliciting emotions within its audience and containing exhortation. It can also be argued that this is a protreptic directed specifically at women within the ancient world. Perkins (1994:838) argues that within the text Perpetua is presented as an empowered woman who is able to transcend the hierarchical structures within the society she belongs to. As a Christian woman, Perpetua's power is illustrated as she is able to overcome her *pater familias*, which was the first point of authority within the Roman imperial state (Perkins, 1994:838). Thus, I think it can be argued that this "feminine emancipation" of Perpetua through the narrative may have influenced some women to turn towards Christianity, as it may have allowed them some form of control over their lives.

3.6.2 Paraenesis in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*

Essential elements of paraenesis such as language of encouragement and confirmation of faith as is noticed in section 3.5.2 above, is also found in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* narrative. As noted in section 3.5.2 above, even though martyr stories narrate the gruesome deaths of those who confessed to be believers in Christ and the texts tend to acquire a sombre tone, there are emotive descriptions of the triumphant experiences of the martyrs. This positive emotive language is especially made noticeable within the editor's contributions as he continually praises the strength of the martyrs, the power of their stories, celebrates and glorifies their deaths: "thus no one of weak or despairing faith may think that supernatural grace was present only among men of ancient times, either in the grace of martyrdom or of visions, for God always achieves what he promises" and "Ah, most valiant and blessed martyrs! Truly are you called and chosen for the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord! And any man who exalts, honours, and worships his glory should read for the consolation of the Church these new deeds of heroism which are no less significant than the tales of old" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 1:6 and 21:11).

Additionally, the reader is constantly reminded by Perpetua about the greatness of Christianity. This is illustrated as Perpetua continually keeps resolve in her faith by not giving into the persuasions of her father "well, so too I cannot be called anything other than what I am, a Christian" and "it will all happen in the prisoner's dock as God wills" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 3:2 and 5:6). This

resolve and strong faith are further illustrated in 18:9 when the martyrs are being led to their deaths in the amphitheatre. In the midst of these dire circumstances, they are joyful that "they had obtained a share in the Lord's sufferings". Later on in the text, the audience reads that Perpetua, after having been tossed by a heifer, summons her brother and other catechumens, in order to remind them to "stand fast in the faith and love one another"; she also tells them to "not be weakened by what we have gone through" in *Passio Perp. et Feli.* 20:10.

Moreover, the reader is reminded through the visions of Perpetua and Saturus about the promises of the Christian God and an eternal afterlife. Within Perpetua's first dream the reader is reminded that Christ will always be there with you in your hour of need and is illustrated when the dragon becomes docile after Perpetua mentions the name of Jesus "'he will not harm me,' I said, 'in the name of Christ Jesus.' Slowly, as though he were afraid of me, the dragon stuck his head out from underneath the ladder." (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 4:6-7). The first vision of Perpetua also serves to remind the readers about the promised rewards which await steadfast Christians in heaven as Perpetua is greeted by "an immense garden, and in it a grey-haired man sat in shepherd's garb…around him were many thousands of people…he raised his head, looked at me, and said: 'I am glad that you have come, my child.'" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 4:8-9). I believe that the promise of an afterlife is also represented in Saturus' vision as he and Perpetua were "carried towards the east by four angels" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 11:2). Saturus also writes: "This is what the Lord promised us. We have received his promise" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 11:4). In addition to this, the landscape of Saturus' vision presents itself as a utopian one with angels, lots of greenery, fellow Christians who were martyred, endless prayer and a youthful man with white hair (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 12:1-7).

Within Perpetua's second vision, the readers are tactfully reminded that deliverance from suffering can be attained through prayer and belief in Christ. This is illustrated through the appearance of Perpetua's deceased brother Dinocrates who appeared to her in a state of great suffering: "I saw Dinocrates coming out of a dark hole, where there were many others with him, very hot and thirsty, pale and dirty" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 7:1-9). Perpetua writes "and I prayed for my brother day and night with tears and sighs that this favour might be granted me" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 7:10). The reader is then made aware that as a result of Perpetua's prayer, she receives another vision in which her brother "had been delivered from his suffering" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 8:4). Kitzler (2007:10)

argues that Perpetua believed that her brother's suffering was brought to an end through her agency alone.

Furthermore, Perpetua's last vision features her being transformed into a man and battling with an Egyptian in the amphitheatre "then out came an Egyptian against me, of vicious appearance…my clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man" (*Passio Perp. et Feli.* 10:6-7). I argue that this vision can be interpreted as a representation of the ongoing battle between Christianity and paganism within the empire. Perpetua writes that she was able to defeat the Egyptian in her vision but as soon as she woke up she realized that "it was not with wild animals that I would fight but with the Devil, but I knew that I would win the victory" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 10:14). The imagery represented here may have been to remind readers that Christianity will triumph over paganism.

Within the visions of Perpetua and Saturus, the two authors emphasize their shared worldview with the readers by reminding them of the convictions which are already known to them, as noted above. Lefkowitz (1976:418) believes that the appeal of Christianity, especially towards females was the encouragement to break "traditional family patterns" and it also enabled converts to "share in a new existence". Moreover, Kitzler (2007:1) maintains, women were awarded an honourable position within Christianity and as such, their status in society was alleviated.

Also the entire last chapter, written by the editor, aims to remind Christians that being a martyr of the church is an act which is greatly honoured and revered: "Ah, most valiant and blessed martyrs! Truly are you called and chosen for the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord! And any man who exalts, honours, and worships his glory should read for the consolation of the Church these new deeds of heroism which are no less significant than the tales of old" (*Passio Perp. et Feli*. 21:11).

On the basis of all the above I think that it can be argued that *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* could be read as a paraenetic within the early Christian church. This is especially noticed through the language of encouragement and confirmation of faith throughout the text as well as the visions of Perpetua and Saturus. Furthermore, it can be argued that the editor's introduction and conclusion to the text aims at providing some sort of comfort and reassurance to the early and growing Christian community in Carthage during the time of sporadic persecutions.

3.7 Conclusion

The aims of this thesis were twofold. The first area of investigation was to assess the extent to which Jesus Christ's *passio* as found within the canonical gospels may be called a "proto-narrative" of the early Christian Church. The investigation of a "proto-narrative" was carried out in order to assess whether authors of martyr literature used the gospels in creating their narratives and the effects this may have had on the followers of the early Church. Thus, a thorough comparative literary analysis was carried out in chapter two which not only provided an outline of points which were similar in all four gospel accounts, but also made note of main events from the gospels. As a result, the "item" and "detail" list was used as a template in order to assess whether the *passiones* of Stephen from Acts, Polycarp of Smyrna and Vibia Perpetua were based on the gospel narratives.

Additionally, table 12 which provides a comparison between the gospel accounts and the selected martyr *passiones* reveals that not only are there many similarities between the accounts, confirming the idea that the gospels were used as a "proto-narrative", but also that martyr stories contained a wealth of narrative mirroring. As was emphasized by Franzmann, quoted in section 2.6.1, authors may have written their *passiones* in this way, as figures who imitated Jesus became figures of imitation themselves, as this was a common theme within the early and growing Church. Thus, through the thorough examination of martyr narratives, assessment of *imitatio Christi* and occurrence of narrative mirroring, it has been shown that the gospels were used by early Christian authors as model for the creation of their *passiones*.

The confirmation of the gospels being used as a "proto-narrative" and the findings in chapter two played an instrumental part in the analysis of chapter three and the second area of investigation within this thesis. Through a closer examination of the selected martyr *passiones*, chapter three examined whether these narratives were written with specific protreptic and / or paraenetic purposes in mind in order to assess the effects that these stories may have had on their readers and their contribution to the growth and spread of the early Christian church. Thus, through a thorough examination of the language used within these martyr *passiones* in chapter three, it has been revealed in sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6, that the selected texts functioned in both a protreptic and paraenetic sense within the early Church. As was noted in the introductory section 1.1 above, Cook

noted that early Christians used language, and particularly quotes from scripture, in various ways in their efforts to convert people to their religion. I argue that the findings in chapter three illustrate this very well. It has been argued that from a very early stage the power of literature was recognised and it was used as a device for influencing the behaviour of people. This is very evident within early Christian martyr stories. Apart from early authors literally using the gospels as a "proto-narrative", the strategic use of language within these narratives was also a device to reaffirm the faith in those who were already believers, as well as to turn others (outsiders) towards Christianity. There could be various reasons as to why later *passio* narratives were based on those in the gospels and why specific language was used within these narratives. However, I propose that we should understand the creation and spread of martyr literature as being instrumental in the growth and spread of the early Christian church, first during times of persecution in the empire and conceivably in a similar way also later after persecution had ended.

However, this study and the narratives assessed here merely provide a starting point as only 3 narratives from the early Church were taken into consideration. A larger, more varied sample size of early Christian martyr narratives should be taken into account in future studies.

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